HM

THE HARD MUSIC MAGAZINE

Norma Jean
Haste The Day
Slayer
Robert Randolph poster
Altar Boys
Stryper
Behind the scenes at HM
Top 100 Christian Rock Albums List

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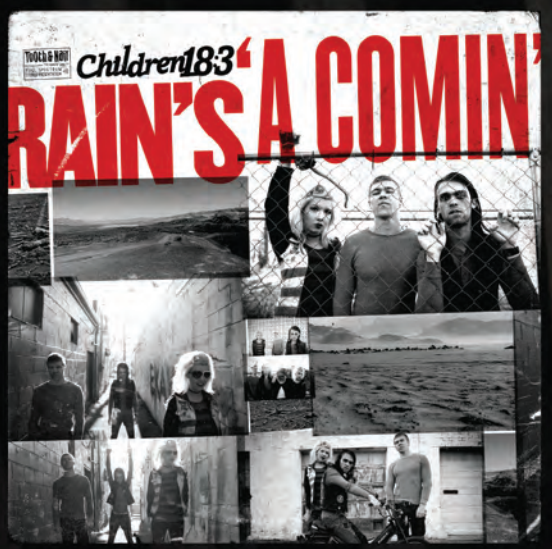

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From the editor

Doug Van Pelt

THE FLAW AND A HALF-BAKED APOLOGY

We're happy to be able to say that this magazine has been published for 25 years now. It's been exciting, rewarding and difficult to see this dream for a music magazine that focuses on Christian heavy metal, rock, punk, alternative, etc., come to life and carry on. We are grateful to God and His people for the support we've had over the years. Over the years we've had a few special "Anniversary issues" (our 7th, 10th, 15th, issue #100 and the 20th). To be slightly different this time – in addition to some retrospective articles – we've centered this issue around a daunting task: The Top 100 Christian Rock Albums of All Time list. This brings me to my next point:

There is a flaw in the label "Christian Rock." We've all known this forever, right? There are four popular explanations of what defines a song or album as "Christian Rock." They are:

1) the song features lyrics that tell the Gospel story (sin, salvation, Jesus);
2) the song features lyrics that, while not necessarily conveying the "Gospel message," are shaped by a Christian worldview;
3) the song is performed by and/or written by Christian musicians (including instrumental music or "secular" lyrical themes);
4) the song is considered "Christian rock" by many Christian people or, for lack of a better term, it is "of interest" to Christians.

It is the fourth definition that we've kind of gravitated towards over the years. Because we've taken this approach, some of our selections on this great list might be questioned by purists and/or the bands themselves. If your band is on this list and you don't consider yourself to be a "Christian rock" band or you've even gone to great lengths to distance yourself from this career-influencing tag, we have a half-flippant and half-sincere apology for you. "Sorry. It is what it is. Deal with it."

A great man once said, "The purpose of lists is to inspire argument." While no one may have ever actually uttered that statement, I believe it. We hope you enjoy this issue. As always, let us know what you think!

SPINNING AT HM NOW

ERWIN MCMANUS	*Wide Awake*	An audio book that edified creativity in me.
JET VELVET	*S/T*	Beatlesque harmonies and pop. Good.
JOHNNY CASH	*Setlist: The Very Best...*	A live performance compilation with gusto.
ANBERLIN	*New Surrender*	Fighting on the list choice vs. Friendship vs. Cities.
FLYLEAF	*Momento Mori* (demos)	Don't be jealous of Bianca's musical collection.
THRICE	*Beggars*	Jeff's been overdosing on Thrice lately.
LIFE IN YOUR WAY	*Waking Giants*	Uplifting hardcore that's got Nathan stoked.

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Letters to the Editor

PETE STEWART IN HM?

First of all, thank you for fighting the good fight in keeping HM in print. It is by far the best publication that finds its way into my mailbox! Secondly, I was wondering if you have considered doing an interview with Pete Stewart? As I am sure you are well aware, he is still cranking out some stellar music, both solo and with Grammatrain. It would be interesting to hear from him in regard to his break from the Christian music scene, his time with The Accident Experiment and most recently his reunion with Grammatrain. Thanks for your time!
–Dave Kratz, via internet

Nate – First of all, I'd like to know what other publications make their way into your mailbox (it doesn't take much to top Divine Equestrian Quarterly). Secondly, I would love to get Pete in here. I'll get someone on that.

THE SHAPE OF METAL TO COME

What is your perspective on the lifespan of hardcore/metal music, especially in the Christian subculture? I have noticed, like most, that hardcore and metal have been receiving more attention over the past 5-10 years. Case in point, Cornerstone, IL is mostly "heavy" bands. Do you think the genre is at its peak and will begin to decline, like punk or grunge did, or do you think the Internet will continue to fuel the (formerly) niche audience?
–Nick Hardy, via internet

Nate – Emo kids turned into scenesters, who evolved into hipsters. Music is in a sweet transitionary period right now and I feel like the people who really get where the scene is and where it's come from are going to fight to keep it alive, but as a whole I expect a lot of metal and hardcore to be overtaken by pop punk and indie rock. I could write an essay on this.

CHIODOS SAYS...

I've been reading back issues of HM recently and ran across the interview you did with Chiodos last year. In the introduction to the interview you mentioned that the band member dodged a couple of questions, and then you published the text of the interview. After reading the interview I realized that not only did he dodge a couple of questions, he wasn't very effusive with the rest of his answers even though you gave him some all star questions. When reflecting on the intro you wrote and then the body of the interview itself, I realized that you showed great restraint in not adding any personal opinions to your intro. It would have been easy to rip on the guy or make a disparaging comment, but you refrained. Nicely done Doug! I always enjoy the so-and-so says interviews, and most of the band members seem to not want to quit talking, so the Chiodos interview stood out for its brevity. You seemed to handle this well during the interview, and you certainly handled it well in the article write-up. Thanks for showing the love!
–Barry Wolfer, via internet

Nate – If you liked that, just wait until you read our "Slayer says" story.

GETTING THE MAG TO THE MASSES

I can't tell you how thankful I am for you and the magazine and ministry. I am getting ready to purchase 10 subscriptions for my Sunday School high schoolers. With so few outlets for "good" Christian music I have been a fan and reader for a long time now. I am also going to donate to the cause. My wife and I are praying about the amount. I have been so blessed by you all over the years. As a 39-year-old professional man, I don't know what I would do or how I would find out about all of the amazing music God is inspiring these young men and women to make without HM. I incorporate music in my Sunday School lessons each week and have played everything from the old P.I.D. (Preachers in Disguise), who are in my top 100 albums, to Project 86 and the kids just eat it up. I hope and pray God will continue to use you all and I want to thank you for your faithfulness.
–Tim Otken, via internet

Nate – Thanks man, we've been really blessed by the encouragement that's been sent our way. Be sure to check out the Top 100 Christian Rock albums to see how it compares to yours!

Ed – I hope y'all don't mind how I let Nate step in and reply to the letters this issue. We love to prove that interns do more than fetch coffee here at HM Magazine.

HM

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SCRIPTURE "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where theives break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal." (Matthew 6:19-20)

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HARDNEWS
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NEW SHOWBREAD DISC A GIFT
FIFTH ALBUM TO BE FREE DOWNLOAD

After 12 years as a band and four albums on a large record label, industry veterans Showbread have decided to try something completely new. The band has partnered with Come&Live! – an organization that helps ministry-oriented bands offer their music as a free gift – and is preparing to release its fifth album as a free high-quality download. On September 21, 2010, the band plans to return to Radiostar Studios in Weed, California, to begin recording the album with Sylvia Massy, who has worked with Tool, Johnny Cash and Prince, among others. Showbread are accepting donations to help fund the production and distribution of the album. To that effect, they're offering some perks. Everyone who makes a donation to the band will be given a membership to the Rawrockmilitia.com forum, including the "exclusives" section where Showbread post rare content.

STRYPER'S "HOLY LAND" TOUR
2011 VIP TOUR WILL BE LIMITED TO 150 FANS

Platinum-selling Christian metal pioneers Stryper will be hosting a 10-day tour of the Holy Land February 12-21, 2011. Stryper fans will have the opportunity to hang out with the band during this travel opportunity. "Oz, Robert, Tim and I are excited to go to Israel and see first-hand the birthplace of Christianity," says Michael Sweet. "And to be able to share this experience with some of our fans makes this even more incredible." Sites to be visited on the tour include Mount Carmel, the Jordan River, the Garden of Gethsemane and the Dead Sea. The cost of the trip is $3,299 per person, which includes airfare out of NY, LA or Toronto; hotel accomodations; all buffet breakfasts and dinners; an English-speaking tour guide and entrance fees to all sites. Reservations can be made for $300 by e-mailing Ari Bauer at ari@ihtours.com or calling 1-877-999-8868 ext 415.

Destroy the Runner finish the race

San Diego metalcore giants Destroy the Runner have broken up. The band's official statements explains: "We all posses an insurmountable gratitude for any and every one who has given our music a chance. There is an even greater gratitude we possess towards anyone who has helped us in any way on the road or at home. We have been fortunate enough to have met some of the most incredible people on our journeys, and we thank all of you for imparting your fervor on us. We hope to see you all again one day." The band has no intention to release its highly-anticipated third album, but individual members will continue to write music in various projects, including Chapter 14 and Other Mountains. Check out hmmag.com for an exclusive interview with vocalist, Chad Ackerman for more information about the fate of DTR and what the future holds.

News bullets

Fortyfest has re-scheduled after its rained-out date earlier this March. The new date is August 21, 2010 and the lineup includes: **Red**, **Decyfer Down**, **Pillar**, **Project 86**, **Brian "Head" Welch**, **Wavorly**, **Ivoryline**, **The Letter Black** and **Don't Wake Aislin**.

Skillet, **Theft** and Red have been announced as special guests on select dates for Creed's *$20-10 $Tour*, which kicks off July 28 in Washington, D.C. and ends September 4.

August Burns Red is embarking on a mini-tour of South America. Between August 13 and August 28 the band will play six dates on the continent before heading back up to the States to conclude their summer tour in Frenchtown, New Jersey, on September 4.

Petra will be back in the studio this summer to re-record a CD of previous hits from the records *Never Say Die*, *More Power to Ya, Not of this World*, and *Beat the System*. Classic songs like "More Power to Ya," "Judas Kiss," "Grave Robber," "Adonai" and "Beat the System" will be revamped with a modern production edge. In addition, the band will craft some new songs to add to the classic hits on each record, with production scheduled to be completed August 10, 2010.

Facedown Records has signed Minneapolis/St. Paul's **Your Memorial** as the newest member of its roster. Your Memorial will release its debut album for Facedown in winter 2010.

MXPX's **Mike Herrera** will tour South America with his rockabilly side project, **Tumbledown**. The tour, which includes nine dates, will begin on August 12 and end on August 22.

Haste the Day is playing a leg of *Warped Tour* in support of its fifth album, *Attack of the Wolf King*. The band's run on the tour will conclude on August 15.

Universal Records released a disc of early demos by **Owl City**'s **Adam Young** July 27. *An Airplane Carried Me to Bed* offers 11 tracks that Young recorded in his teenage years as **Sky Sailing**.

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Petree

BY MATT CONNER

Sorry Mr. Petty, but sometimes it's the moving that's the hardest part.

For Stephen Petree, such a move required a calling to form a new alt-rock outfit, yet the creation of Petree also meant leaving his brother and friends behind in a little band named Shiny Toy Guns.

"During the time I was making the decision to bow out and cut to something different – that was definitely the toughest thing I've done, especially because it's my brother," Petree said.

"That was tough. Then it was also wrestling and saying, 'I hope I made the right choice.' You see, the songs that you wrote or co-wrote and used to play with the guys, and now they're blowing up. All that comes in and makes you say, 'I hope this is it.' But after a year, I was approached by a record company and then you think, 'Well, this is what I held out for.'"

Now, the L.A. quartet is finally releasing *Weakness Makes You Beautiful*, a collection already finding airtime on MTV's *The Hills*. Petree said the songs themselves don't differ much from his former musical endeavors.

"From a songwriting basis, it's not much different," Petree said.

"I don't think 'selfish' is the right word, but it was just about doing this by myself. In the movies, you have the hero, who has to go out and finish things off by himself. Not that I am by myself right now, because there are other guys in the band, but the principal songwriting came from me, and where I was headed. So, I think a lot of it had to do with that aspect of it."

Petree wrestles with missing out on the success that Shiny Toy Guns now enjoys, but ultimately he knows he made the right decision. It's a choice not based on success, but Petree's beliefs about the very art he's been called to create.

"What drives me is art more than anything else," Petree said.

"Success certainly helps, but the decision to leave was based on an expression I needed to make as an artist that was slightly different than what Chad (Petree) and Jeremy (Dawson) and I had going together."

Flyleaf is celebrating its alliance with World Vision to help stop human trafficking with a free MP3 of "Set Apart This Dream." If you text UNITE to 20222, $10 will be added to your cell phone bill and a donation will be made to World Vision's effort to rescue the victims of sex slavery.

Collective Soul were scheduled to play their first headlining gig in their hometown of Atlanta in two years on June 23 at Chastain Park Amphitheatre.

Billabong's 4th annual Design For Humanity benefit was scheduled to be held on June 10 on the NYC Streets Backlot of Hollywood's famous Paramount Studios. The massive block party featured two concert stages, DJ dance parties, a runway fashion show showcasing Billabong clothing, a custom art gallery and more. 100% of ticket sales and proceeds from the art shows went to Invisible Children.

Facedown Records' **In the Midst of Lions** are in the studio with Jamie King working on their Facedown debut, *The Heart of Man*. The album is scheduled to drop in August 2010.

As I Lay Dying continued to climb the Billboard charts with their fifth album, *The Powerless Rise*, which was released on May 11. The album debuted at #10 on the Billboard 200 with first-week sales of 38,000.

The mammoth *Cool Tour,* featuring As I Lay Dying**, Underoath,** Between the Buried and Me, **blessthefall**, The Acacia Strain, Architects, Cancer Bats and **War of Ages**, is set for a 18-date run that extends from July 12 through August 1.

Daniel Davison (ex-**Norma Jean**) will fill the drummer's seat on the recording sessions for Underoath's new album and on live dates during the *Cool Tour*.The follow-up to 2008's *Lost in the Sound of Separation* will be released this fall.

Thrice embarked on a huge headlining tour in support of last year's *Beggars* on June 3. The tour wraps up July 17 in Pomona, California.

LIVE REPORT

The Powerless Rise Tour: As I Lay Dying, Demon Hunter, Blessthefall, War of Ages

May 10

REVIEW: JEF CUNNINGHAM; PHOTOS: DARREN TROMBLAY & DANIEL GARCIA

(Nashville, TN) A night of metal in music city is always a good thing, especially since just over a week before torrential rains flooded vast majorities of downtown Nashville and surrounding areas. Luckily having a generous serving of tasty metal to take your mind off things was just what everyone in attendance needed.

Doors opening 20 minutes late barely gave the near-capacity crowd time to filter into The Cannery Ballroom before **War Of Ages** began. They sounded HUGE with impressive guitar work and Leroy Hamp's massive-sounding vocals. The last song of the set was the crowd favorite "All Consuming Fire," where Leroy split the crowd in half before the song began, and once the song dropped in the crowd erupted into a pit that engulfed most of the room.

Blessthefall came onstage to an epic instrumental intro that was reminiscent of a LOTR score. The crowd seemed pretty docile for most of the first 3 songs, only coming to life around the mid point of the song "To Hell & Back." The vocalist Beau Bokan made mention of the recent floods and that all the bands were donating their food per diem for that day to flood relief, which I thought was a pretty awesome gesture due to the fact that on the road you don't make a whole lot of money.

Demon Hunter took the stage and the crowd was primed to sing along. Opening with two tracks from the newest CD *The World Is A Thorn* after an interesting solo guitar intro by Patrick Judge. The band played a great mix of material from all but the S/T debut. This incarnation of DH seems less polished and more like an angry motorcycle gang ready for a brawl than previous lineups with the new members seeming quite at home in such a beloved and established band. Vocalist Ryan Clark owned the stage and had the crowd in his pocket. Most of the time the crowd sang louder than the club's PA system. Demon Hunter never disappoints and left this crowd wanting more.

As I Lay Dying began with an epic, morose classical intro while the stage lights strobed in time with the music. The crowd erupted tenfold their highest energy output as AILD launched into "94 Hours" singing along so loud that you couldn't hear vocalist Tim Lambesis and would be hard pressed to distinguish the powerhouse soundtrack underneath. AILD is such a tight, focused band and I was shocked at just how heavy they actually are. The crowd sang every word to every song with the songs "An Ocean Between Us" and "Within Destruction" sending the crowd over the edge forming giant circle pits around the ceiling support beams. Jordan Mancino delivered a stellar drum solo at the midway point of AILD's set utilizing several metal "tricks" but was able to keep it interesting and technical at the same time. The band kept up its intensity and energy throughout their entire 15-song set.

Clockwise from top: War of Ages; Demon Hunter's Ryan Helm; Ryan Clark; Blessthefall's Eric Lambert (photos: Darren Tromblay); and AILD's Josh Gilbert (photo: Daniel Garcia)

STRYPER

"The chemistry of the songs and where we recorded the songs and the time we recorded the songs – you name it. It was all lining up perfectly..."

"I remember that it was an interesting time," explains frontman Michael Sweet as he relates what the band was thinking around the making of *To Hell With The Devil*. "We wanted to step up everything in a production sense and go to a new level, so we reached out to some producers that were doing some big things and this guy that we contacted was named Stephan Galfas. He was sold as the producer/co-writer for the big hit single by John Waite, 'Missing You.' We thought, 'Oh, wow! Cool! This guy is doing big things,' and we wound up working with Stephan and we wound up finding out that he didn't produce that song. It turned into not a very good situation and we felt like he wasn't really on the up-and-up and whatnot. We had a lot of question marks in our mind as we were going along and it became disrespectful and somewhat negative and we thought, 'Oh my gosh! This isn't working,' but in the end we wound up coming up with a great album and the most successful Stryper album of all time. So, that's all that mattered. We had a blast making that record. It was fun. Everything just came together. The chemistry of the songs and where we recorded the songs and the time we recorded the songs – you name it. It was all lining up perfectly. So, we were able to create this amazing album that did incredibly well for the band."

One of the highlight moments of this album is how two of the songs (each released as singles and videos) segue one into another. "Calling On You" has a big choral ending that's immediately followed by a drum roll that goes right into "Free." Sweet commented on how it happened: "It's one of those things when you're mixing an album or mastering an album that those ideas kind of come to you. It may be suggested by a band member or a producer or the mastering engineer, where they say, 'Hey, it'd be really cool if these songs go right into each other.' It worked perfectly with those two and we do it live, too. We've continued to do that ever since we started playing those out live back in 1986. We kept it going. We still do it to this day. We go right into 'Free.'"

Stryper is about as active as ever these days. Last fall saw a very successful tour that was reported to be killer performance after killer performance. The band is currently finishing up a covers album, called *The Covering*, which should hit later this year.

"We decided to really have some fun and not be under the burden or the stress of having to put together 12, 13 or 14 tracks for a new album as we have been for our entire career. We decided, 'Let's just have some fun. Let's do an album of all the songs that infuenced us musically.'

"It's interesting. We got a little resistence, but not as much as I expected. I don't know if we'll get a lot more when it comes out, but I think people are much more open-minded than they were 25 years ago when we first came on the scene. I think people would have freaked out and we would have been persecuted beyond measure for doing so back then. We're doing 'Heaven and Hell' by Black Sabbath; we're doing 'Over the Mountain' – Ozzy Osbourne; 'Trooper' – Iron Maiden; 'Blackout' – Scorpions; so there's some controversial stuff on there that people might be opposed to Stryper covering, but they were specific songs that shaped us musically, so that's why we wanted to cover those songs. They changed our lives musically and basically made us who we are musically speaking. Primarily, a lot of these bands were influencing to Oz and I with our guitar playing – like Randy Rhoads, Eddie Van Halen, Scorpions, Iron Maiden. Not so much vocally. Klaus Meine is amazing, but he didn't influence me as a vocalist. It's going to sound like me singing the songs.

"We're doing a new song as well, called 'God,' that's more old-school Stryper. A melodic metal song and lyrically very bold and in-your-face and cut and dry kind of message."

[Photo by Todd Myra]

BY DOUG VAN PELT

ALTAR BOYS

"I knew going into it (*GLM*) that this was going to be a special record."

"In fact," recalls frontman Mike Stand, "I told our road manager, John Stott, at the time, 'This is gonna be an important record!' If you look at my songwriting from the *Altar Boys 1* to ...*Rebel* it was progressively getting better, I think. As a writer, it was a little more prolific. And during the recording process, I just knew that this was something really special. Billy Batstone was supposed to produce it. He did *When You're A Rebel* and he wasn't able to, so Terry Taylor and Rob Watson produced the record.

"The songs were written in about a year and a half time frame, a lot of it in my home. 'You Are Loved' was actually written on vacation in Palm Springs. My wife wasn't too happy that I was distracted with writing songs," Stand chuckles in recollection of 1985 and 1986. "I was constantly writing at that time. On 'I Question It,' one of the suggestions was that it was too short. 'Let's fill it out with a slide solo.' (Devlin) played slide guitar on it. That was really exciting. I remember when Ric brought in 'Life Begins At the Cross' I just went, 'Wow! This is great!'

"It just felt good recording it. It felt good when it was done. During the process we had all but two tracks down and Jeff got a piece of glass in his finger, so we had to wait on two tracks that had to get done – about a month or two. It was a special record as we were recording it and when it was done we felt real good about it."

Besides having created one of the great albums in Christian rock history and being part of a great band, Stand has been married to his wife for 25 years and is still walking with Christ. Not every musician from that era, unfortunately, can say that. "There, but for the grace of God, go I," he responds when asked how he managed that.

Musically, he's active in a rockabilly band called The Altar Billies.

"A friend of mine named Johnny X, who I met about seven years ago and we started playing together at a Bible study about four years ago. That led one evening to him turning to me and saying, 'You know what? The Altar Boys stuff would be really great sung rockabilly!' I said, 'Huh?' And he goes, 'No, really! Let me do a little demo of 'Against The Grain' and I went, 'Oh... Yeah.' And we started formulating some things. We played a church picnic and were asked for a name, so we threw out, 'Uh ... it's the Altar Billies.' At that time I was working on my master's degree. When I finished that up in the fall of '09, we decided to work on something serious. It's been great. More recently we added Chuck Cummings to the mix. We do half covers and half Altar Boys songs. It's just a great twist on the music.

"At first I got some flack, 'What are you doing?' Kind of making a mockery of it. 'Why are you doing this to this music?' And I said, 'You know, it really is early punk rock.' When rockabilly first came out with Elvis, it was something so different and so unique and also it was in a lot of ways like punk, where people were going, 'What is this stuff?

"But that's what I've been doing and it's been great. We're playing one to two times per month and we've done some recording. It's great just to be playing again. For all intents and purposes, I was retired. I had done my thing. It was fine. Raised a family. Been there, done that. Didn't feel the need to go out and play. We did a couple Altar Boys reunions and that was great. We decided to put that away permanently in 2006 and boom! This comes along. It's been incredible. It's been great to get out and play these songs and do it with a different twist. It's so accessible, yet it's still on the edge."

BY DOUG VAN PELT

SCATERD FEW

"that album was always so much bigger than me and has its own legs and a life of its own."

Scaterd Few made a thunderous impact in Southern California back in the early '80s, which was finally captured and recorded on the *Sin Disease* album that Terry Taylor produced for Intense Records almost a decade after the band's formation.

"The thing I remember about making that album," relates frontman Allan Aguirre, "is, man, it was rough! I was so broke, I wasn't able to pay my rent, I just had a baby… We were recording in Orange County and that was a good hour-plus away from the Valley. We lived just on the other side of the Hollywood sign and getting to the studio was a challenge. I remember we got to the studio really late and that was typically because of transportation. I mean, I had to bum rides just to get to the studio and we were mixing and I remember, we showed up like three hours late or something. They were pissed. Gene said he was really mad, and I'm like, 'I can't help this.' So, it was really rough.

"We didn't really have a guitar identity with that album. The guitarist we had quit after a third of the recording session, because I guess his wife evicted him from the band. It was one of those typical, textbook LA scenarios: you got a guy that plays guitar really good and his wife or a girlfriend or whatever decides she's gonna try and control the band and she realized very quickly that was never gonna happen … so she convinced him this band was going nowhere and he needed to quit. So, he left after a third of the recording process. So we had no guitar identity, which meant we had no gear, so we're borrowing guitars and amps from everyone. I remember Pat Nobody from Nobody Special, he didn't live that far from the studio … he was lending us gear. I hated the guitar on that album for the most part – a big chunk of it. Terry brought in Greg Flesch from Daniel Amos. He played some stuff on there. Greg Lawless from Adam Again – we brought him in and he played a little guitar stuff on there, because we had no guitarist. I'm not a lead guitarist. I can play rhythm and I did, but we needed some shredding leads on that thing and between the guy that was, 'in the band' when we got into the studio, Lawless and Flesch, we were able to lay some leads on there.

"So, not having any money, not knowing how I'm gonna pay my rent, and having really spotty transportation brought an element of – not desperation, but – hardship to it. When you're making a record it really helps if things are going smoothly. We went for it, we did it. It was just the place and working with Terry and Gene and those guys are amazing and the rapport we've had with them. I mean, you're talking about a seven-year relationship at this point, so it was awesome. I think it was an unspoken … we all knew without having to say anything that we were actually doing something that was going to be special. You never think about it, but looking back – we knew we were doing something pretty cool. We were doing something that was going to be pretty significant, but surely not to the extent that here we are, 20 years later and I still get phone calls or opportunities because of one record I made."

Today Allan is "leading the charge of a bunch of 20-year-olds in a prophetic worship band called Men as Trees Walking." While it might sound like a far cry from his days with Scaterd Few, it's a long story how he ended up in Texas of all places, but there's a common thread with the reggae roots in each band. "It's kind of like a reggae, Middle Eastern tribal type of thing," he describes, "a little different smooth jazz undertone to it and it had to be the Keith Green model of unadulterated pure worship before the Lord with the entire intention to bring Heaven down on Earth, not a feel good warm fuzzy pep rally."

He describes the Christian music industry that was built in the late '70s and early '80s as an "Ishmael" that was not the Lord's plan for us. "That's how what's happened to the music industry is no surprise to us. We've watched it happen for the last 30 years. We've been watching it going limp, but look at what's happening. Look what He's taking down and look at what He's raising up. Is it any surprise that at the exact same time Come&Live would start? Sonny would hear the word to start the Whosoever's and the Exit Concerts. That Rypo would rise up… It's no big surprise. It's orchestrated by the Spirit, not man. So we all found ourselves, we're musicianaries. We've abandoned all to serve Him and to go like He told us to. At what costs? Well, our lives, our homes, our families, our possessions and to offer the Gospel in this arena free of charge. The Last Days Ministries model: 'Pay whatever you can. If you have a lot, give a lot, because there's a guy behind you that only has two bucks to give, too.' Isn't that just insane? And that's what we're doing. It's hard, because there's no model, there is no manual, we're figuring it out as we go along."

Hmmm. Sounds kinda like the beginning, huh?

BY DOUG VAN PELT

TOURNIQUET

"It (*Psycho Surgery*) was our first album as a full band. That was exciting."

"Obviously," admits drummer Ted Kirkpatrick, "I was very into tornadoes at the time, because we did that song, 'Viento...' It had quite a bit of medical terminology on it. I know at the time a lot of people thought it was like my dad was a doctor or something. Actually, while I was in Tourniquet I was also in high-tech medical equipment sales, so a lot of the lyrics came from that. On songs like 'Vitals Fading' and the title track, 'Psycho Surgery.' It was exciting. We had just gotten Eric Mendez in the band. Eric and Victor (Macias). That was their first album. It was our first album kind of as a full band. That was exciting. That's what I remember."

What factors do you think came together to make that brief period of time so prolific for Tourniquet (maybe including the debut album, maybe starting with *Psycho Surgery*, but definitely including the third album, *Pathogenic*)?

We were a full, five-piece band at the time and it was in the early stages of our Frontline contract, so it was fun in that we were just starting to do live shows and Frontline was kind of getting them set up, kind of getting out to the festivals and so on. I think it was a combination of when you have an album out, now things are a little different. Now there's a lot more self-promotion going on, that's for sure. At that time, with Frontline, you'd record an album and they, of course, had connections with the festivals and different shows and then we would go out and play songs. You'd announce from the stage, "This is the first time we're doing this song live." That made it special. Also we had rehearsed the songs as a band before we did them on the record. We'd actually rehearse the songs as a band before they were even recorded, so that was something a little different, too. I think most bands probably do that, but sometimes with Tourniquet, when we played live, everybody ... because we're in different places, everyone's got to know their parts and, you know, hopefully, if everything goes right, everybody finishes the song in roughly the same time.

What are you individually and the band collectively up to these days?

Nothing has changed from day one of Tourniquet – from *Stop the Bleeding* for me. That meaning that I still consider it so much fun and a privilege and very humbling to see the number of fans and people that are constantly bugging us to put out a new album. I still absolutely love doing Tourniquet. We've never been a touring band. A tour for us would be four shows strung together. That's not really a tour. I now have a recording studio at our home. Before it was kind of a music room where I would practice. I released my first solo album just about a month ago. It's called *Ode to a Roadkill*. Most people that are into Tourniquet know that I'm very, very sensitive to the issues of animal protection and animal welfare. Always have been and I imagine always will be. So, this is kind of a tribute to animals that are struggling throughout the world. I'm really happy with how it turned out. It's a very different album. It's what they call a stoner album. I'm very happy with the way it came out. It has a very vintage sound to it. I used some 1970s Orange amps from England and Sun bass cabinets (also) from the '70s. I'm also about to release a new solo album, called *In The Shadow of the Masters*. And, along with the animal welfare, another thing I'm absolutely crazy about is classical music. So, this is me drumming over symphonic and other classical things, which I've done maybe one song here and there on past albums, but this is an entire album of that. Drumming-wise, it's beyond anything that I've done before. I'm just about finished with it and I can't wait for people to hear it. Hopefully, it'll be out by the end of May.

Lord willing, we're recording a full-length Tourniquet album later this year. It's been a long time – way, way overdue for a new Tourniquet album. 2003 was the last album, which was *Where Moth And Rust Destroy* on Metal Blade. We're scheduled to use a different producer – Neil Kernon – on this. He's a well-known producer from England, but he lives not too far from me. He's done everyone from Judas Priest to Dokken to older bands, like Yes and Kansas and weird bands like Magma, that I've loved for years. He's done some Platinum albums, like Hall & Oates and the real heavy stuff, like Nile and Cannibal Corpse. I'm very excited to be working with him.

[Photo by Jannis Lootens]

BY DOUG VAN PELT

BRANDON EBEL

PREDICTIONS: "THE DALLAS COWBOYS ARE GOING TO WIN THE SUPER BOWL THIS YEAR. MARK IT DOWN. MOST ROOKIE RECEIVERS DON'T DO WELL, BUT DEZ BRYANT IS GOING TO KILL IT. I THINK MORE PEOPLE ARE CONSUMING MUSIC THAN EVER BEFORE. IT'S MORE COMPETITIVE THAN EVER BEFORE. I THINK THAT MOST LIKELY THE DAYS OF HAVING ARENA BANDS LIKE U2 MAY BE OVER ... UNLESS IT'S AFFILIATED WITH A TV SHOW. BUT, NOW MORE THAN EVER, BANDS THAT WANT TO WORK HARD AND THAT ARE FOCUSED ON THE VISION OF THEIR BAND CAN SUCCEED."

"I want to thank HM for being an awesome partner over the years. We've done at least one print ad in every single issue since we've been a label. We're in HM, baby!"

One of the most endearing things about Brandon Ebel is his passionate love for things. Football might be at the top of the list. *Might be*. We all know by now that God, family and music are right up at the top. Whenever I'm around him I love to talk football, though, because he's so animated, informed and vocal about the things he has an opinion on. If Jim Rome ever loses his job for going over the line on his radio show, this dude could easily take his place – and do better.

For this issue, I wanted to get a bunch of pioneers in a room and let them talk about their pioneering ways and the highs and lows that Christian rock as a business has seen. But then I realized that this guy is in a league of his own. Forget Ray Nenow and Jimmy Kempner. Ebel's outdone them all.

When asked what he's done right in these last 17 years, his words are short and simple: "Signing really great bands that work hard and then branding Tooth & Nail, having a brand-type entity and a loyalty to the brand."

As a music fan, it wouldn't be hard to guess which bands he'd want to work with if his label had started, say, 10 years earlier than it did. When asked this hypothetical question, he rattled off a short list that's long on greatness: "LSU, the Crucified ... maybe 411, Nobody Special, Daniel Amos, Adam Again." In retrospect, 1993 turned out to be a perfect time to start his label, since early on it re-issued the self-titled proper debut from the Crucified (and later their demo releases, *Take Up Your Cross* and *Nailed*); had Gene Eugene engineer a ton of albums for T&N prior to the singer's untimely death; and even released a Mike Knott solo album (*Strip Cycle*, with arguably one of the greatest songs ever in the satirical "Rock Stars on H").

"When I started the label, people said, 'You shouldn't do a label. There's too many labels already.'" Once again, the pioneer proves his early detracters wrong.

Since that time there's been a lot of joy-filled moments for the label, including: "Getting our first Gold record with Jeremy Camp and Underoath; getting MxPx on K-ROQ down in LA and when they first got on MTV; both MxPx and Supertones both getting real big and they would go and play with thousands of seats sold out; and getting out of debt," he adds with a chuckle. This is an understatement for anyone that's launched a small company, many of which never get out of debt, much less change the landscape of an entire music scene.

It's especially exciting for us old-timers, who used to dream of the day of walking into a Licorice Pizza or Musicland or Tower Records and see a Christian punk rock album sitting there – next to the band with a similar alphabetical character instead of a theological difference marking where the album is displayed (in other words, "not stuck in a Gospel section that only believers waded through"). Tooth & Nail have done a great service for us by taking their brand and their bands far outside the sheltered walls of the Christian bookstore market. Call it genius. Call it revolutionary. Just be thankful that it happened.

"The number one goal is to put out music that is legitimate and sign bands that are legitimate," Ebel says. "If you do that and the focus is on the music and letting the band do what they're called to do, all the rest will follow. When we brand and market Tooth & Nail it was really all about the bands. We didn't try to shove our beliefs down people's throats and brand it as 'This is Christian this' or 'This is Christian that.' It was like, 'Hey, here's a label. It's Tooth & Nail. Here's the bands.' We were never a non-profit organization or a church. We were a record label that was supporting bands that had a similar worldview as I did. That's how Tooth & Nail has always been run."

The fact that this model worked speaks for itself. "That was always the goal."

[Photo by Renee McMahon]

BY DOUG VAN PELT

MICHAEL GUIDO

"What's it like when you pray with this band or that band? I say, 'Well, it's basically the same. When you close your eyes and bow your head, it's little boys in a big man's body, scared to death, wanting to know God is their Father.'"

I first met Michael Guido back in 1985 when Stryper blew into Texas with its small entourage of a couple crew, family members, a manager and this Italian guy with a broad smile and a Bible that could be seen, as often as not, with his hands on someone's shoulder praying with them. Just a year or so earlier he'd been enlisted by their pastor to lead the band in a small Bible study in Stryper's garage rehearsal space that grew and grew. Since then he's toured with bands like dcTalk, P.O.D. and numerous other artists. He's not a frontman or "public" personality, but there's not a nicer guy that you'd love to have around.

While I've never seen him clamor for attention or try to get credit, I figured he would be a perfect fit for this special issue where we share stories about the past, present and future of this scene we call "Christian rock." I knew it might be kind of awkward to interview him and I secretly feared we might be tinkering with the guy's heavenly rewards if we offered him praise in print in these pages.

Turns out I had to chase him in a game of phone and text message tag to make an interview happen. On the eve of the interview, he called and asked me to pray for him. We prayed just before he stepped off a bus to go in and impart ministry to the band he was touring with. It felt just like being there and it was a privilege to ask God to remove his doubts, fears, stress and grant this brother peace as he was moments away from entering a small circle of musicians. For a brief moment, these guys will set aside time to look at this former ceramic tile dealer and listen with expectation for God to impart His heart through this guy.

Turns out, though, the interview would not take place that next day. Or the next. Or the next. To not fret over it I had to trust that this article idea was a God-inspired one and that we'd eventually connect. It's like I was living in his world.

It was getting late. I'd sent him the interview questions in an email as a back-up in case the interview could not take place over the phone before deadline. We finally connected on the phone. Turns out, though, I didn't have to ask a single question. All I had to do was turn on the tape recorder, sit back and listen as he read and addressed each question with a casual but thoughtful explanation. It was like an expository sermon with only an outline.

I wanted to know what he did and how he did it. "I'm supposed to be in the background waiting for a moment. If you ask me what I literally do, it's I'm waiting for a moment. Getting inspired by the Spirit and not forcing it. It's hard."

Those moments are simple encounters. If you're the musician or the lighting guy or the person in catering, your moment might start out like a normal conversation, but the guy you're listening to is on a mission from God to connect with you in a real way. It's a simple connection that's based on relationship. If it's one-on-one, you'll have his full attention. He'll listen intently to you and share with a soft voice but a clear direction. It's like the discipleship that Jesus modeled: pour yourself into a small group of people and then they're equipped to do the same to others.

"I deal with so many battles on the road. I feel like I live in a toxic environment. The only cure is the fresh life of a relationship with Christ. I have to have it in my own life, so that I have some credibility. No one's gonna get it perfectly, or no one would preach on Sundays, you know? The pulpits would be empty. But I do think sometimes we lose sight of the holiness of God and how He really does want to take over our lives.

"I'm called a lot of names, but I don't think the label of pastor or chaplain opens the door. It builds a wall. I'd rather open a gate. Hopefully it happens with the lead artist, but it's not always the case. When people ask me which band I'm here for, I say neither and both. That whole road pastor thing has kind of evolved."

When he originally asked his commissioning pastor what to do, he was told: "Just give 'em Jesus!" Guido admits: "That's the best advice I've ever been given."

BY DOUG VAN PELT

[Pictured LR: Chris Daughtry, Michael's wife, Celeste and Michael Guido]

What **Slayer** Says

I'D HAVE TO SAY THAT THE ONLY MOSH PIT I'VE EVER BEEN AFRAID TO JUMP INTO WAS THE MASSIVE, ROTATING PIT AT THE AUSTIN OPERA HOUSE BACK IN THE DAY WHEN SLAYER PLAYED A SHOW. IT WAS MOVING FAST, WHICH WASN'T THE PROBLEM. IT WAS SO BIG – RUNNING FROM CLOSE TO ONE SIDE OF THE STAGE BACK TO THE EDGE OF THE FLOOR THAT IT SEEMED TO GIVE EACH PARTICIPANT ENOUGH TIME TO ACCELERATE UP TO HIGHWAY SPEEDS BEFORE THEY'D BOUNCE OFF THE CROWD LIKE A BILLIARD BALL ON A TRIANGULAR TABLE. IT'S NOT SURPRISING THAT THIS MOST SERIOUS PIT WAS IN FRONT OF THIS SERIOUS SPEED/THRASH METAL BAND. TALKING TO THIS LEGENDARY FRONTMAN, TOM ARAYA, WAS AN HONOR AND HE TURNED OUT TO BE QUITE THE GENTLEMAN AND INTELLIGENT MUSICIAN. READ ON TO DISCOVER WHAT IS A MOST FITTING BAND TO GRACE THE "WHAT SO & SO SAYS" FEATURE FOR OUR 25TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE.

L-R: Kerry King, Jeff Hanneman, Tom Araya, Dave Lombardo | Photo: Mark Seliger

In looking back over the years, what were the hardest times for Slayer, and what were the best of times?
[he laughs] The hardest times of Slayer. I think, I think that would encompass our entire career. [laughs] Our entire career has been a hard time. The best of times for Slayer was when we headed off to Europe and did our first European tour. I think that that would have to be a pinnacle point for us. We were young, naïve and invincible [laughs]. Now we're old and weak [laughs]. I think that was our invincible period, 'cause we had everything going for us, you know.

Yeah. What was the year, and what was the reaction from the crowd like?
The year was '85 and that was like the very first time we ever played Europe. We had just released, or were going to, an album with Metal Blade, *Haunting the Chapel*, which would have been our second album. And having never really ... we played across the States, but, you know, to a hundred, two hundred people. When we hit Europe we opened, we headlined this festival, that had 25,000, (we'd) never played in Europe before.

Nice!
Which blew our minds. And then everywhere we went, we had over 500 kids, you know, which we're like, 'Why doesn't this happen in America?' [laughs] You know what I mean? And, so, I think that was our highlight, although, since then we have had highlights in the past.

Judging by the giant circle pit with, like, a sling shot ricocheting action going on at a show in Austin, Texas with Motorhead way back in the day, I imagine you guys have seen some serious injuries at your shows over the years, what's the worst you've seen and how has the band responded to incidents like that?
We respond the same way to all injuries. You name it, we've had it. There are some venues where they have a medical, like a triage, set up in the back areas, so, a lot of time, there's been large shows where we've actually taken the walk to the stage where we pass the medical office or triage, whatever they have, kids passed out, heat exhaustion, knocked out 'cause you got hit in the head, broken noses, broken legs, stabbings, people that have gone to the emergency room and just come back all bandaged up so they can finish the show. [Laughs] We've seen it all, believe it or not. Yeah, there's a lot of broken bones. There's a lot of people just passing out. You know, we've seen everything I guess. Everything under the sun you can think of that happened at the show, we've witnessed. And, a lot of it is the fans, you literally see them like, 'Yeah, I've got this cast put on, they took me to the emergency room, but I wanted to come back and catch the show.' [laughs] You know it's crazy that a lot of these kids get hurt before we even go on, so they never get to see the show. [Laughs]

That's amazing.
Yeah, you know, what are you gonna do? Kids – they are gonna go have fun, and all I can say is, 'Be cautious and try to be safe.' At least they'll catch the show if they're safe.

Yeah.
We always say the same thing, 'Those (bleep) are crazy! [laughs]. It's about the only thing I have to say about Slayer fans, or mosh pit fans in general that like to go out and beat themselves up.

Yeah. Well, I promise we'll talk about World Painted Blood, but I want you to take us back again to the earliest days with Slayer. What led you guys to shoot for setting a new speed record in playing? How do you guys play so fast, and what does it take to keep up chops like that?
[laughs] A lot of practice. Believe it or not, when we started playing in the band, the music

we were writing was more hard rock oriented. We were playing original – like originals with cover tunes. And Brian Slagel saw us play a show, and said, 'Hey, I want you guys to do a song for one of my *Metal Massacre* albums.' So, this is the story of how we became fast. We took a listen to one he had just released. I think it was *1*, or, he had released *2,* I think and was planning to release a third one, and asked us if we would be on it. So, we went and we bought the *Metal Massacre* records, the two that he had released to see, 'Okay, well let's see what's on it.' And we listened, Metallica was on it, there was a few bands that were on it that were like, we knew who they were and we wanted to see what they sounded like and we just looked at each other, and we thought, 'We need to come up with something heavier and faster than this stuff.' And that's how we came up with 'Aggressive Perfector.' And we've been playing fast ever since. Because we knew that we could play faster and heavier than those bands, and that's what we set out to do and that's what we are.

That's cool.
Believe it or not ... and after that we just played live, and we instinctively just played faster, you know, the better we got.

Well, congratulations for hitting the mark, man!
[laughs] Thanks. Well, you know, I owe credit to the bands on both *Metal Massacre 1* and *2,* because without them we wouldn't be here.

Yeah. What do you think of Jesus Christ?
Sorry?

What do you think of Jesus Christ?
What do I think of Jesus Christ?

Yeah.
Um, he was a teacher. He was one of the many teachers to come and help save mankind. There've been many teachers. One of them is Christ, the other was Buddha. You know, coming to help save man from himself. What do you think of him?

Well, uh, I think that I believe what He said about Himself. Um, My next question was gonna be, what do you think about His claims to be "the Way, the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father but by Me?" So, my answer to you would include that, and I was gonna ask you that as a follow-up question.
Say it again.

What do you think about His claims to be "the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but by Me?"
Okay. Uh, you can take that to mean anything. I take that to mean that, 'if you are like me, then you can be like me.' You know, you'll make your way to the Father. In other words, 'If you can be Christ-like, as I am Christ-like.' That's what I get. You can only go to God if you are like Him, which is being a good person.

Gotcha.
You have to be a good person in order to move on.

I guess my answer to that would be, I believe that in the context of a statement like that, that He was talking to Jewish people at the time, and He was basically claiming to be the Son of God or God in the flesh; so, uh, I happen to believe that's Who He is, that He claimed to be God to a bunch of people that (if you're) saying something like that, you're either a liar or it's true, and, of course, he made people often mad at him by saying that.
Yeah. Well, they claimed that he was crazy.

Yep.
But, uh, you know, it's about a way of life. You choose to be Christ-like. Then, there's a lot of hope for you [laughs]. I believe him. I believe that he believed he was the son of God. And I believe, because we're all born of someone. And I do believe that we are all, we're all God's children. He put us here, in my opinion. Or *they* put us here.

I hear ya. Slayer has often delved in the imagery and word-play of the macabre and so-called "evil." How harmless is all that for you, and what if any negative byproducts do you associate with that?
Oh, wow, you know, uh... You know what? That's a tough one, because everyone says, 'You can't walk a fine line between between good and evil. You know what I mean? You can't walk on the fence of good and evil. You have to choose. You know, it's about writing really great songs with really great music, and it just so happens the subject matter that we write about is very dark – the dark aspects of society, you know? But that's it. It's a way of expressing ourselves, expressing ideas, you know what I mean? Things that we read about, things that we see... You know, sometimes there are things that we don't like that we'll use. It's like anything else you have. If there's something that catches your eye, you have to write about it and tell people about it, and I guess that's kind of what we've been doing with that. Writing about things that we see and making people aware of what's going on around them. I also think it probably makes better decisions in life, I don't know, people probably think we've been doing a lot of, 'The end is near, the end is near, the end is near!' You know? And with the very last album it's more like, 'The end is here.'

Yeah.
In this album, you can hear – in my opinion, you can hear the urgency in the album – about how this is it.

How real is the supernatural realm to you guys? What evidence, if any, have you seen of it?
I haven't seen any evidence, but I do watch *Ghost Busters* [laughs] *Ghost Hunters.*

Yeah?
I see a lot of evidence on that show [laughs]. Uh, I've never really experienced anything like that. I've never had a ghost story to share. But, I believe, you know. Maybe. I don't know about Jerry or Dave – if they have any ghost stories to share. In my experience the only ghost story to share, was the fact that I almost... I didn't *almost* – I drowned. When I was, like, two years old.

Really?
Yeah, that's about the only ghost story that I have.

It's been referenced in numerous articles and whatnot that you have a Catholic upbringing. I'm not Catholic myself, but when I look at the writings and things that are read or spoken at a Mass, for instance, I am very impressed with the theology and what I perceive to be the truth. A common criticism I've heard about Catholicism is that the rituals are good and true, but somehow the message is missed that God the Father desires and offers a real, personal relationship with His people. It's like God is represented as a mean old man you approach once a week and not an intimate, personal entity that you interact with on a daily basis. How accurate or valid would you say that criticism is?
You know, um, wow! [pause] That's actually ... you make a good point. You make a really good point. You know, you're right, but I don't view God that way. I think God is on a personal level with everybody. You just need to find Him. You know what I mean? And the only way to really find him is to talk to him, which of course, is by prayer, you know what I mean? The only way anyone can really connect or have a personal relationship with God is if they sit down and talk with Him. He'll listen. I know that for a fact. You know what I mean? All you gotta do is sit down and talk and develop your personal relationship with him. Nothing hard about that. I don't think people have a tough time getting beyond, you know, 'Is there really a god?' Unlike most people, maybe it was because of my upbringing, but I'm the kid of person that is more of a blind faith. I don't need to see it. I don't need proof. I know, and I think that's the way we should be. I think that's accurate. What you said – is a personal relationship with God starts with you.

That's a good point. How did you guys manage without Dave Lombardo? What were the auditions for a replacement drummer like?
[laughs] Well, it was tough. It was tough, you know? We were lucky, we were fortunate and lucky to come across Paul Bostaph, who in my opinion is the only other drummer for this band. So, that's how we managed without Dave. We got another great drummer, Paul Bostaph. And then when Bostaph decided he didn't want to stay anymore, that's when we hooked up with Dave again. And we just kind of slowly built that relationship with Dave again and everything else that happened in this band, we were lucky and we were fortunate. We saw the opportunities in front of us, and kind of just took them and went with them. When Dave came back to do a tour with us, he got wind that we wanted to do an album, and said he was more than happy to do it. And physically we started building a new relationship with Dave. And it's turning out awesome, everything was great. We did it without Dave for a brief moment in time with Paul Bostaph. I don't think we would have been able to do it without Paul. That's how we managed to do it without Dave.

How did you injure your back, how did your surgery go, and how's the healing and rehab been?
Well, the pain was in my neck. It was in the base of my neck, the shoulder area. I had two compressed disks, which were pinching a nerve that were making the left side of my body spasm out. I did surgery. I no longer have pain. I no longer have numbness or spasm. I'm feeling awesome; I have a great doctor – Dr. Raddy – who is amazing. I'm feeling great, I'm so far up, I'm back to being Tom Araya again. No more head banging, though. I have a titanium plate in my neck.

Wow, how big is it?
Uh, maybe about an inch and a half with six screws. I have three vertebrae that are attached to it. But, I'm doing fine. I feel great, like I'm ready for this tour. I'm ready to make up the dates that we canceled. I'm ready [laughs].

What songs were the most difficult on World Painted Blood, and what songs stick out for you on this album?
Wow, the entire album sounds great to me, when I listen to it in

it's entirety of the album. 'World Painted Blood.' That song stands out to me. That's a very strong song, and that one stands out to me. Uh, but the album in general, the entire album is a great album, (bleep) awesome. Some of the songs are a little riffy and stuff, but you know, once you practice something, they're easy.

I'm curious if you've ever heard of the album Human Sacrifice by Vengeance Rising, and if you have any thoughts on that.
Never even heard of it.

Okay.
What's it called?

Human Sacrifice and the band was Vengeance Rising.
Human Sacrifice [pausing as if he's trying to recall or is writing it down].

It had quite a Slayeresque sound to it, but they broke up a long time ago.
That's the name of the album or the band?

The album, Human Sacrifice.
What's the name of the band?

Vengeance Rising. They're from LA from about 88 to 95, I guess.
Can you find it in a store?

Um, you can probably find it in a used CD bin, but I think it's long out of print.
Oh, okay.

In looking back at Slayer's career, what if anything would you do differently if given the chance?
I'd have a video camera. I'd have a video camera and record everything. [laughs] Everything! And everything that happened in my lifetime, to write it down, so when I get older I can write a book and put it in print. You think about that 30 years later [laughs].

Yeah, it's a good answer.
You think, 'Damn! I should have wrote stuff down. Damn! I should have…' So, if I had to do it all over again, I wouldn't change a thing. I'd just make sure I had a camera.

What's it like for a band of your style and stature to play a TV show like Jimmy Kimmel Live?
It's awesome. Playing a TV show period is awesome, it doesn't really matter whether it's *Kimmel*. You know what I mean? Just being on national television is pretty cool. That to me is the big thing. 'Cause when you do a show like *Kimmel*, or a show like – actually Kimmel is the only person that's actually really put us on live. The only other person that's ever done that was Jon Stewart when he had his own show on Fox, which was really cool. Two people that are willing to take risks and have a band like us on their show [laughs]. Just being on TV or playing national is awesome. It's a national network. It's a channel that everybody watches, everybody gets for free [laughs], so it would be a good way to let people know that, "Hey, Slayer is playing for real, and they are gonna do a tour," and that was a way of letting everybody know that – that we're jamming again.

I know we're probably running late on time, I got a question I'd like you to comment briefly on each of the albums in your career, and just say as little or as much as you'd like to say about each one.
Where do you want to start, *Show No Mercy*?

Yeah, Show No Mercy.
Show No Mercy – classic record. I wouldn't change a thing. Considering how quickly technology has advanced, I love that album; I think that one was the template of what was to come. Especially as far as invention and what we were writing about. I think *Hell Awaits*, another classic, where we grew as far as songwriters, as far as being able to craft long songs. [laughs] We can write eight-minute songs, too. Those three songs we actually had and were played live when we had *Show No Mercy*. Brian Slagel heard 'em and said, "Let's record 'em!" So we recorded 'em.

Reign in Blood. There's not really much to say about *Reign in Blood*. When we came together and worked on the album itself, they didn't want to do an album like *Hell Awaits*. They wanted to do something fast. They just didn't realize how fast it could be. [laughs] So, and then the course of being in the studio, we're like, 'Hey Dave, kick it up a notch!' It made it just a little faster. Then we went to *South of Heaven*, which was perfectly written the way it was because we didn't want to do another fast album like *Reign in Blood*. Which is a good thing because then we would have burned that out a long time ago. Everybody else did that for us. We didn't. Then, so *South of Heaven* was one that was intentionally due to release to slow down, so we could slow it down, period.

And now, with another development of our songwriting and our experience in the studio, followed with *Seasons*, which in my opinion is a combination of everything we've done prior. We combined all the talents of *Show No Mercy*, *Hell Awaits* and *Reign* and *South*. We came up with a definitive Slayer overall sound – heaviness, sound, vocal, everything came out on that record is the way Slayer has been. And then after *Seasons*, that was our last... We did three albums with Rick Rubin, and then when we started with *Divine*, that's when we started with a new drummer, and that's when Paul came in on *Divine Intervention*.

The songwriting, in my opinion, has continued to develop. We had some really great albums, I think the albums from *Divine*, *Diabolus*, *Undisputed*, *God Hates* and then *Christ Illusion*, we had some really great album material and stuff, but I think the production on these records wasn't quite what it was with Rubin. *Divine* to me, it's the one record, in my opinion, if we rerecorded it or redid the entire album with a new production and a new person producing it, it would probably be a lot better-sounding album. That's one album that I'm not very happy with – and that's more like sound 'cause we had great songs on that album, it's just the quality of the production is not very good. *Undisputed Attitude* to me is an underrated record, even though it should have been... It's a cover album. There's three Slayer-written songs and one being 'Gemini,' but that album I think is an awesome record. I think that record was produced by Dave Sardy, which to me, he did a great job on that album. And that's the one album that came out sounding really good compared to all the ones that came out in that time frame. *Diabolus* was a very speed-related album. It had a lot of good beats in it, it was a very rhythmic album. And then there was *God Hates*. That's another record, in my opinion, that probably could have been produced a little better. We had someone come in and do an entire remix of the album after we had mixed it, and it sounded a lot better. But, that album could have been a better album in general, in the recording process as far as just songs, singing, melodies and all that stuff. I think that, had I been allowed to do what I do, which is what I had done on *Christ* and *World Painted Blood*, on a lot of those albums in that little time frame could have been a lot better. *Christ Illusion*, that was coming closer to going back to what we were as a band in the studio, *Christ Illusion* is a great record because we were doing what we did initially when we started recording with Rubin, which was, everyone was participating, everybody was part of the recording process, and then *World Painted Blood*. We found a producer in Greg Fidelman that captured ... he did what Rubin was able to do with our other three albums. 'Cause everyone was like, "How does it feel to be able to go back and do another classic Slayer album?" We went in the studio, we went in to record a Slayer record. A Slayer record like we always have. We always go into the studio to record a Slayer album. I think Greg Fidelman did such a great job at capturing the Slayer sound that he managed to do what Rubin did. He got that classic Slayer sound. He's the only one that got that Slayer magic that he did.

"The only way anyone can really connect or have a personal relationship with God is if they sit down and talk with Him. He'll listen."

Was there anything else that you wanted to add?
Yeah, thanks. Thanks to our fans for all your well wishes, for your prayers … that I came out of this in great shape. I owe 'em a lot and I want to thank them for that. I'm very eager to get on the road and make up dates that I'm sure people had to alter their lives a little bit for the first show, and now will have to alter their lives a little bit for this coming show … I'm looking forward to making the dates in person.

Anything you want to say about Ronnie James Dio?
My condolences to Dio's whole family and to all his fans, all his fans out there. He was a big man. And we're all gonna miss Ronnie. I hope everyone keeps his memory alive.

Absolutely, that's a good way to describe him too as big, he was small in size but man he's big in stature.
That's about all I gotta say.

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HM MAGAZINE

25 Years in Authority

BY NATHAN DOYLE

As we celebrate HM's 25th anniversary, anyone with a calculator can run the numbers; we've seen political change, pop culture shifts, economic rise and fall; 1985 introduced the world to Tetris and *Wrestlemania*, the Kansas City Royals won the pennant and Marty McFly went back to the future. It would be another three years before I went from an idea to an infant, but there were already wheels turning that would impact me and thousands of other readers.

Doug Van Pelt started Heaven's Metal with a typewriter, a stapler and lots of paste, working in the library at the University of Texas, printing at Kinko's and building each issue in his living room. As a junior in college he was filling a niche that the majority either neglected or misunderstood. Christian music was supposed to be calm, controlled and direct. Metal was angry, aggressive and dangerous. When bands like Stryper and Jerusalem combined the two, the cultural marriage between Heaven and Hell found a platform with Van Pelt's new publication.

Twenty-five years, 144 issues and an abbreviation later, HM has gone from the tiny metal fanzine handed out with desperation at festivals and record stores to the unquestioned authority on heavy Christian music. While we're still printing Stryper features (see page 16), HM made the deliberate choice to shorten from Heaven's Metal to HM in 1995. According to Doug, "In the early '90s Nirvana changed the face of metal with one song. 'Smells Like Teen Spirit' basically stuck the knife in metal because heavy metal had become mainstream – hair metal and glam metal and pop metal had become huge and were all over MTV. Metal kind of did it to itself by being so big and so popular it stopped innovating, it stopped being crazy and outrageous and became so mainstream and accepted that it was safe. Metal became a parody of itself and was asking to be kicked in the butt. Sure enough, a punk rock hybrid did it with grunge ... In the mid '90s, our name was Heaven's Metal and people associated us with metal and that was not a good thing because metal had run its course and had become a bad word. We still covered anything that was hard and heavy, so we started using the phrase 'hard music' which was pretty popular and the subtitle was, 'Your hard music authority' in a bar under the 'Metal,' in Heaven's Metal. Then we changed to HM which was just an abbreviation of Heaven's Metal to some people, and some people thought it meant Hard Music because Hard Music was in the subtitle …The transition was rough because some of the old-school metal heads felt like we were betraying the genre, that we turned our back on true metal. The problem was, most of the metal bands weren't being creative. They were getting their butts kicked artistically and creatively by other artists that were exploring other realms. Music was evolving."

By making room for other genres from ska, punk, nu metal and pop rock, to anything ending in -core, HM no longer branded itself as a metal publication. HM evolved into a magazine that specialized in anything fast, fun, experimental or heavy, as long as the music found roots in Christ. Sometimes that identity is blatantly obvious, and other times it takes a little research, but in the end, HM has made a home for the bands that didn't belong in the pages of CCM and are often neglected by AP, Rolling Stone or Revolver.

But if you're still reading, that's all old news.

Metal bands weren't being creative. They were getting their butts kicked artistically and creatively by other artists that were exploring other realms. Music was evolving.

Yeah, HM focuses on heavy Christian music – it's in the name. Like any publication, HM has evolved from a hobby to a full machine with living gears and a pounding heart, and at the heart of that machine is Doug Van Pelt, running around like a monk in a bell tower, queuing every tone, setting every page and personally listening to the, literally, hundreds of albums that roll through the HM Ranch on a regular basis. While most magazines hire entire departments for editorial, design, online and administrative duties, Doug almost single-handedly operates HM Magazine from a double-wide trailer on 11 acres 45 minutes from Austin, Texas.

HM's own MySpace Cowboy, Levi Macallister explains, "I expected to drive up to an office building in Austin, a duplex or something. When I passed through Austin on I-35 and found myself – literally – 15 miles from Wal-Mart and eight miles from a gas station, with a bunch of cows and donkeys hanging around munching grass all over the place, I thought, 'Ah Good Lord, what did I do to myself?' And then, after I'd passed the double-wide [trailer] that is The Hard Music Magazine, I pulled into the driveway, and Doug's standing there with his shirt off, sweating like the Texas heat finally up and set somebody on fire, fixing his lawn mower, that sexy blue-collar man."

At its largest, HM kept a staff of five employees and five interns at the HM Office. Since then, the dire economic straits have forced the magazine to downsize the operation. Doug explains, "The economy went bad in 2004 and we laid off the mailing list person, a cool guy with tattoos and stuff. He thanked me later, he said he was like Jonah; he needed to be kicked off the ship because he went to art school and now he's like, the graphic designer for Abercrombie & Fitch. He went on to do what he really wants to do. Then when the advertising person and the management editor left I decided, 'You know what? I've been in reactionary mode where I automatically replace someone when they left. I'm just gonna see how it goes without replacing them and try and absorb those job duties,' and that's what I've done, so now it's just my wife and I."

While Doug still keeps a constant rotation of interns on his roster, his wife, Charlotta, currently serves as the company accountant / mailing list supervisor / office manager from their home. All other duties are either e-mailed off to any one of the dozens of individuals invested in the HM vision or hammered out in-house, and as the economy and the print industry continue to fall, more and more of that workload finds itself staying at the Ranch, "About a year ago I laid off my ad sales force that was based in Nashville. Ad sales were consistently so low that I couldn't afford their commissions in addition to their low sales, so I took that back in house … I'm kind of breaking under the weight of doing all the jobs now."

As costs rise, subscriptions fall and the workload increases, Doug is at a point in HM's history where the future is far from clear, but he is following a calling, a vision, and a purpose. According to Charlotta, "I don't know that HM could function without Doug ... Doug is the magazine, he's the one with the vision, he's the one that feels like this is his calling, that this was something given to him by God and without him it just isn't anything."

✖

Norma

NORMA JEAN IS ONE OF THOSE "GO-GETTER" TYPE BANDS – BOTH MUSICALLY AND INTERMS OF GETTING STUFF DONE. SO IT MUST HAVE BEEN FRUSTRATING FORTHE BANDWHENTHEY HIT A WALL WITH ONE OFTHE EARLY SONGS WRITTEN FORTHEIR NEW ALBUM, *MERIDIONAL*, WHERE EVERYONE IN THE BAND KINDA HATED IT AND WANTEDTO SHELVE IT. AN OLD LESSONTHEY LEARNED FROMTHEIR PREVIOUSTWO ALBUMS CAME INTO PLAY HERE.

"We started writing that song and we got really sick of it quick," admits frontman Cory Brandan. "And we didn't even like it for a long time and it got shelved. And it all just got to where we're just not even going to work on it anymore. But we kind of pushed ourselves through it. That's one thing we learned with Ross Robinson on the last two records was push yourself through something. Don't just give up on something because you're not sure. There was a reason why you started writing that song. There was a reason why you started these lyrics. They're linked to something. It all comes together somehow. So, we pushed ourselves through it and the song just came alive once we had vocals on it. And that was when we finally started loving it. I remember (drummer) Chris Raines calling me when we were doing that tracklisting. We had to pick two or three songs to leave off the record, because we recorded so many songs. The first thing he said was, 'Dude, I know 'High Noise Low Output' has to go on the record! I love that song!' That was kind of weird hearing from him, because we didn't like that song at all at first. We really tortured ourselves pushing through it, but it came out really cool. There's a really dark feel to it and kind of the birth of *Meridional* in a way. You can kind of think of that song is kind of a birth pain."

It's ironic, then, that the lyrics for "High Noise Low Output" focus on those times where you fuss and fret about something instead of just doing it. At the end of the day, though, the band can point to its very real output and know that they didn't yield to uncertainty, but forged onward.

Brandan explains: "'High Noise Low Output' is a lot about thinking you're supposed to do something and basically over-analyzing that to 'is this what I'm supposed to do with my life?' You know, way over-thinking something to a degree of basically worrying about your future … even asking questions like, 'Is this what God wants you to do?' I think even questions like that can really brutally kinda confuse you even more when really, when I think it comes down to it, is if you're passionate enough about something then you should just do it. It's okay to, like, just try something. It may not be what you're 'supposed to do with your life,' but I've always found that through being in a band for years and years and years and being a parent, too, raising two kids... In any situation there's a chance to over-analyze a situation. It's almost like the 'High Noise Low Output' is basically talking about what you're hearing basically is so loud and you think it's so right when you think that way, but in reality, it's very low output and it's not anything that's going to get you anywhere."

Brandan and his Norma Jean bandmates once again found a way to put their finger on a common thought or feeling. It's probably a "generational thing" that a lot of twenty-somethings and even 18-19-year-olds go through as they start to stare down the gun of their adulthood and all the options (or lack thereof) in front of them. "For years that's been a driving force, dude. It's basically what I was going through when I was thinking about those lyrics. I was going through a divorce. When you read the Bible, you know, God, He

Jean

"We feel like we can play better or play with more passion if we know what the song is about and it's right on with how we feel about the subject."

knows everything. At times, I'm like, 'Well, God didn't go through a divorce!' You know what I mean? But then when I think about it, I don't see God as a watcher – someone who sits back and He's, like, an observer. I think God is a participator, just like us. Whenever we feel pain, He feels pain. Whenever something bad happens, He is right on board with us – whether it's anger or sadness, He has all of those emotions, too. I think that's a really good way to view God – He's a participator. He's just as much going along with the weight of the world as we are."

The lead-off track to *Meridional*, it turns out, follows along similar lines: "It's basically kind of a conversation between a person just being afraid to come clean about something or however anyone wants to interpret it. For me it was talking to God in a way, like, 'Sometimes I feel like I can't talk to You, because you're God,' ya know? Sometimes I'm afraid to do that. That's where the lyric comes from: 'I never wanted to tell you, we know you've heard it before.' I think that fear is something that's definitely a good thing to get past, because it's definitely not the case. I know that everything I've been through – at the end of the day – you lay down in bed and say, 'I'm with You and I'm not going anywhere' and you have to know that God is doing the same thing and He will. He's always done that with me. I can't talk anybody into believing that with me, but that's just – for me, that's how that song kinda means in the lyrics. I think it definitely can be interpreted several different ways. That's what I kind of like – when you can interpret our songs differently. Looking at anything, you might see something differently than someone else. And that's kinda cool."

The band started writing these songs in January of 2009 and eventually found a new label home in Razor & Tie and then jumped into the studio with Jeremy Griffith, who was a new face to work with, but one that was "on the same page" as the band. "We just had fun with it. We got in there and didn't worry ourselves too much. We wanted to rock out. At that time we had written 'The Anthem of the Angry Brides' and 'High Noise Low Output.' And at that time we had no idea where this record was going to go. But when we got into the studio, it became a lot different than we thought was going to happen. We had a really good time. Working with Jeremy was something new for us, too. Jeremy is a really, really good musician. He's not just an engineer and producer. He's a really good singer and he knows several instruments. That was something that we really wanted, too, on this record. It was really fun just to sit down and play the songs – on an acoustic guitar or something just to show everyone what was going on and hearing his ideas and we really just worked together and brainstormed together. We did that the entire time and it was so much fun like that. So, it was really a blast. We did three days of pre-production, which we'd never done like we did on this record. We recorded every song completely and we just worked on song arrangements for three days. So, we really took the songs under like a microscope. We're just really super stoked. Overall, we just wanted to kinda go for something that was darker-sounding. I think the intention behind the record, too, and the content matches with that as well – even into the artwork. It is a little more straight-forward. It's a different kind of heavy for us, though. It sounds more closer to where we were going with 'Vipers, Snakes and Actors' off the last record."

While listeners might not get the exact same frenetic recipe of *Redeemer*, *O' God, The Aftermath* or *The Anti-mother*, they will have no doubts that they've been rocked at a full metal tilt for 13 songs. Older, untrained ears might think of it as a bunch of noise, but it's anything but a low level of output.

[Read the full-length interview for this story at hmmag.com]

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BY DOUG VAN PELT

WORDS SUCH AS HONESTY AND INTEGRITY ARE THROWN AROUND IN THE MUSIC INDUSTRY WITH VERY LITTLE WEIGHT. THE NEW HASTE THE DAY ALBUM, *ATTACK OF THE WOLF KING*, STRIVES TO SHOW THE HEARTS AND MINDS OF A BAND THAT HAS ENDURED MAJOR PERSONNEL CHANGES WHILE STILL FOCUSING ON WHAT IT IS THAT MAKES THEM HTD.

One could argue that with a single original member remaining, HTD would be better off re-branding themselves, but as vocalist Steven Keech explains, "We are focused on ministry first and foremost. Although the members may have changed, the reason for Haste the Day has not. When this changes, we will change our name." On what it's like losing your good friends in the band, he says, "It was extremely sad to see Jason, Devin, and Brennan all go in a two-year period. When you are in a band with the same people for so long, you start to fall into rhythm with each other." Speaking of the recent additions to the band, "I love each and every person in this band and we are growing into a tight family. With every new member we have seen a new spark of energy and excitement."

AOTWK successfully combines elements from all four of their previous albums while avoiding the nagging feeling that they are rehashing old material. Keech says that it is important for them to touch on what they've done in the past while still pushing their boundaries. "We wanted the record to be as energetic and heavy as the others but we really wanted every song to be just as passionate as the last, bringing new atmosphere and creating a mood without sacrificing any of the old HTD elements," he says.

AOTWK's title may strike some longtime HTD fans as a bit arty, more in the vein of a band like mewithoutYou. I was surprised to find out that HTD had discussed this title in the past. "We wanted to name a tour [*AOTWK*] four years ago, but we ended up naming it *The Silver Bullet Tour* because it was just too ridiculous of a name. We decided to use it and since it fit so well with the concept, it was the best fit for the record. We all think it's a fun title, and we are all really stoked it made it through all the years to become the name of this record." *AOTWK* is a cohesive statement from top to bottom where the songs are held together by a central theme. "I read a story about a wolf

once. A wolf went into a herd of sheep and snagged up the smallest of the herd. He took off into the darkness and was met with a lion. The wolf was terrified as the lion grabbed the sheep from the wolf's clutches. 'This is unfair!' the wolf responded, 'That was mine! You are a thief.' The lion replied with a smile, 'So you are implying that this lamb was yours to begin with?' So this whole record is a concept based on this idea. It's a story of a pack of wolves hunting a herd of sheep. And these sheep are protected by a pride of lions. Every song is from the point of view of one of these groups and each group has its own feel. The wolves have an evil, dark sound, the lions have a big, epic feel, and the sheep have a beautiful sound. I encourage every listener to come to their own conclusions for each of these songs. Let God speak to you and tell you what he wants to tell you. He has spoken to me through these lyrics and they relate to my life in a way that anyone else could understand. So, listener, relate this to your own life and let it speak to you like it has spoken to me."

HTD have always been able to incorporate strong songwriting, an impressive feat considering that with each of their previous albums they've utilized a different primary writer. Keech explains how this method continues with the new members. "Each writing experience has been different in some way [by] shifting between band members. So, I guess through the change it has stayed the same, strangely, but with the current lineup we were able to explore a lot more technical guitar parts, drum parts and vocal melodies. We wrote the whole record as we recorded the pre-production, so it made it easier to write more complex parts." Describing your latest album to someone is often a dauntingly vague task, "When a lot of bands describe their new material they use words like 'heavier,' 'faster,' 'more energetic.' I was about to answer this question that way but when I think about it, these things are subjective. There are bands that I think are the heaviest bands in the world, but some people might say they are slow and boring. The truth is I can say these things and they really wouldn't hold much weight. What I will say is this: We believe this is the most important record we have ever done – more complex guitar parts, lyrics and melodies while still being catchy. It may not sound much like *Burning Bridges*, but if it had it would have been a lie. To describe the new HTD to an old fan I would just have to say it is the most honest thing we could have done."

There are several standout tracks on *AOTWK*, but the one track that I wanted to mention is "White as Snow." It's such a wonderfully moody piece that departs from the formula established on much of the record. "This is one of my favorite tracks," Keech says. "I wrote this song before the rest of the record was written, and I'm incredibly stoked it made it. It fit so well with the rest of the record we had to put it in there. It was fun to tune lower than HTD has ever tuned. Most of the record is in drop C but this song is in drop A which makes it so heavy and gives it such a different feel. This was one of my favorite songs to sing. I was also really glad we could all hear Mike's beautiful voice in the verses. It's something we hear in the van and in every public place but he has never sang like this on a record. It is always fun to experiment with a musical style you haven't played before."

I've been a HTD fan since before *Burning Bridges*. *When Everything Falls* is one of my favorite heavy records, so when this band went through significant member changes I was a little worried that the band I enjoyed so much was gone for good. Definitely not the case, *AOTWK* is a fantastically heavy, artistically strong record that wears its heart on its sleeve. I echo a line from their current bio, "Get ready for your new favorite Haste The Day album."

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BY JEF CUNNINGHAM

The Top 100 Christian Rock Albums of All Time

The reality is that everyone will hate this list (or at least be angry about some inclusion or omission), but the good news behind this arduous task of whittling down the preliminary list of 500+ that we developed down to a final 100 is that there is a lot of great Christian rock out there. The bad news, of course, is that a lot of these titles are out-of-print and probably a tad difficult to find. Maybe the attention this list brings will help resurrect a title or two. This would be an honor and a great reward for this tough exercise in rock criticism.

While the companion/parallel list we printed in our "sister" publication (*Heaven's Metal Fanzine*'s "Top 100 Christian Metal Albums of All Time") had a simpler and more narrow focus, defining exactly what "Rock" is was a tad more difficult. The '90s revitalized and catapulted an ambiguous genre called "indie rock," which certainly threw a wrench into the far simpler "does it rock or not" litmus test. Lighter, ambient and sometimes atonal experiments in music found their way into the hearts of rockers everywhere and we've tried to reflect that in our list assembly, too.

Ultimately, there are five major factors that go into judging an album in this light. One is **greatness**. Did the album touch the skies, so to speak? Did it achieve greatness? This is both subjective and objective. This is where it's good to meet and discuss with industry people with either a keen sense of history or a great awareness of current trends (both is even better). We had the help of friends and compatriots like Brian Quincy Newcomb, Chris Hauser, Dr. Tony Shore, as well as some smart and enthusiastic readers who chimed in on Facebook.

Beyond greatness is that personal, entirely subjective factor of "Do I **love** it? Do I sing along to it?" (or play air instruments). Basically, "Is it one of my favorites?" It would only make sense that your vote for "best" would be equal to or close to "favorite" as well. This criteria is usually what will put an album on the list, and the other four criteria are the kind of factors that will keep an album on this list.

One of the biggest factors is the "**classic**" factor, which I like to break down to the simple question of, "Will I be listening to this album five years from now? "In the case of some early Jesus Rock albums, like *Only Visiting This Planet* or *So Long Ago The Garden*, the lifespan has nearly surpassed 40 years. This is why I rarely give a "5" rating for albums in our Album Reviews section. To me, a "classic" is one of those albums that stands the test of time. It still sounds great long after its shelf-life (which is a pretty sore subject with me and the Christian music industry, who seems to have no appreciation for the classics**). It's really hard to know in the present how something is going to fare when it falls into the deep past of just four or five years.

Another huge factor is the "**historical impact**" of an album. Did it put Christian heavy metal on the map? It could be argued, for example, that Stryper's *To Hell With The Devil* did that with its multi-Platinum sales and mad success on MTV's *Dial MTV*. Did it freak out the establishment big-time? This could be said for early pioneers, like Larry Norman, either of the two Randy's (Matthews or Stonehill) or Petra. Did it evolve a scene or take it to another level? The *Human Sacrifice* album by Vengeance Rising was certainly a historical event.

And finally, which (like the others) could stand on its own as possibly the most important factor (though I'd argue it's not) is **popularity**. Did it sell over a million copies? How many times? Did crowds flock to see the artist on this particular album's tour or shortly thereafter?

Ideally, the Top Christian Rock Albums of All Time would score at the top in each of these five categories. Conversely, if they failed miserably in any one of these categories, it'd be hard to consider it the best.

So, without further ado, we press on with the list to end all lists. Or – more accurately – the list that started World War III in our scene.

"This CD was the turning point for me with U2. This album was so inspiring to the world. It was a universal cry of spirituality and common sense of human feelings. On Joshua Tree Bono continued to inspire me to write honest lyrics, like he did when they first came out in 1980. "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For" helped bring me out of my religious insanity. It was a perfect album in my opinion. The biggest thing I noticed about this CD was after 4 awesome records there was a new maturity in songwriting. God bless Bono and U2."
—Doug Pinnick (King's X)

"The Joshua Tree is not only one of the greatest rock albums of all time, but look at how its sound has directly influenced modern worship. The impact of U2's style on the church of today is unquantifiable!"
—Paul Q-Pek (One Bad Pig)

"Joshua Tree is one of my favorite albums of all time."
—Sonny Sandoval (P.O.D.)

1 U2
The Joshua Tree | Island | 1987

It's only fitting that the top album on this list is also a great candidate (and a good argument) for the top rock album of all time, period – sacred or secular. Given that rock's roots go straight into the church in the first place, it shouldn't be much of a surprise that an artist of faith would make some of the best music around, but it's still a cool thing.

This album took the band from huge to mind-blowing in terms of prominence and historical impact. It starts off with an unforgettable song that both creates tension and brings emotional fulfillment. Like any great blues song, it laments our current conditions as it longs for heaven, where people will not get beat down for living in a certain neighborhood. "Where the Streets Have No Name" has probably the greatest crescendo in rock in what could be the greatest song in rock and roll. It builds with a spiraling tension that just explodes with color – like the transition from black and white to vibrant stage lighting that the band employed for that performance scene in their movie, *Rattle and Hum*. I think the band learned about the power of a hypnotic, building vibe with the previous album's showstopper – "Bad." *—Doug Van Pelt*

** **A note about out-of-print albums and how they get there:** The notion that the Christian music industry is to blame for this lack of appreciation for history is incomplete. You can't blame the guys in the suits at the record companies when you and I as an audience are equally at fault. We don't buy old albums in numbers. Part of that short attention span is the radio and television programming that's out there. If no one introduces us or educates us on the classics, how are we to know? Not everyone has that friend who takes the time to inform you of Christian rock's rich history. Magazines and other mediums are guilty, too. At HM we try to keep a balance of history and current. We know that current is what people want, but we also realize that history is the foundation of what's current. Our old managing editor, Jason Dodd, stole the quote from somewhere (I think): "A spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down." As rock critics we can satisfy our hunger for greatness at the same time we dish out current trends if we have a little of both. The formula for when an album becomes "out of print" goes something like this: when the amount or cost of warehousing the music (think boxes and boxes of CDs on a shelf somewhere) exceeds the income from sales, it's marked out-of-print and flushed out of the system. Retailers may get a chance at one final order with big discounts and then it's off to the "junk dealers," that buy these items in bulk at pennies on the dollar. "I used to get really bummed out when one of our albums went out of print," admits T&N's Brandon Ebel, "but there is an upside to digital" (and that's keeping these albums alive).

"The prayer was that God would use (this album) to get it in front of gazillions of kids. He honored the prayers of the saints."
—Noah Bernardo, Sr. (Founder, Rescue Records; father of drummer, Wuv)

"Satellite changed my life."
—Sonny Sandoval

2 Payable On Death
Satellite | Atlantic | 2001

With an album that came out on 9/11, along with a song that soon became a healing balm for a generation ("Alive"), this album had perfect timing ... and monster jams. "Boom," "Set It Off" and "Anything Right" roared with power, while "Youth of the Nation" was chilling and "Thinking About Forever" was just chill.—*DV*

"One of the most eye-opening albums of my childhood! Changed the entire music rulebook as we knew it!"
—Brad Noah

"One terrific album – great sound, great riffs, solos, hooks – everything a memorable metal album that stands the test of time should be."
—Ted Kirkpatrick

3 Stryper
To Hell With The Devil | Enigma | 1986

When this album broke, it went multi-platinum, forever raising the ceiling of what heavy Christian music could do. While the ballad "Honestly" might've broadened the band's appeal, the band perfected its pop metal sound with sharp-edged songs like "Calling on You," "Free" and "Rockin' The World." They were giants in those days and their message on "More Than A Man," the title track and "The Way" were as clear as any Sunday morning preacher. For some odd reason, however, the decision was made that the painting of four angels casting an evil dude into the fire was "objectionable" and a "safer" version was sold into Christian bookstores.—*DV*

"Making that record was a turning point for us. I had just opened the studio and we were becoming more confident about our music. The record company thought we were doing demo's for them, but we decided we were going to make the record without their input. We felt we were on to something special. That record is still one of my favorites."—Derri Daugherty

4 The Choir
Chase The Kangaroo | Myrrh | 1988

This band helped define how great "alternative" Christian rock could be. This album flows from one track to another with refrains from one ("Clouds") re-appearing in another and referencing a previous album ("The Rifleman"), making the album seem like a warm, yet melancholy journey. "Sad Face" was probably the first great mountain peak the band scaled, which they'd repeat with killer songs like "To Cover You" and "Sentimental Song" on subsequent albums.—*DV*

5 Altar Boys
Gut Level Music | Frontline | 1986

"You Found Me" could be the greatest punk rock love song from God ever written.—*DV*

"A timeless alternative rock classic. Outdoing not just all Christian rock releases, but equal to or better than their secular counterparts The Clash, Bruce Spingsteen & John Cougar Mellencamp. Still on rotation in my music listening regulars. A strong Christian message played & presented with unprecedented passion and arranged with ageless appeal.—*Steve Rowe (Mortification)*

6 The Seventy Sevens
Seventy Sevens | Exit/Island | 1987

This one remains strongly ensconced on my personal top-ten list. Every song is a gem, every moment just about perfect. So what that the rest of the world missed the boat on this one, the band hit a home run. Intelligent, gutsy, brutally honest and undeniably hopeful, I still listen to it regularly and sing along with every word.—*John J. Thompson*

"I can't think of many other records in my collection that are this solid from top to bottom. It also carries a twinge of sadness for me. The songs are melancholy, and there's also the memory of this project getting far less attention and success than it deserved."—*Chris Hauser (freelance radio promotions)*

7 King's X
Faith Hope Love | Megaforce | 1990

You've heard the term "art rock?" Well, this was art metal, and it was perfect.—*DV*

"There was some good stuff on that CD, it was our biggest selling album. But it's like looking at a yearbook for me, I'm just too close to make an evaluation. But I still think 'I'll Never Get Tired Of You' is a great song."—*Doug Pinnick*

8 Stavesacre
Speakeasy | Tooth & Nail | 1999

"Mark Salomon is probably one of three if not *the* top lyricist in Tooth & Nail history. An amazing voice and artist. He's done everything from hip-hop to metal, hardcore and rock. One of the most talented guys I've worked with. That's an amazing record, as well. Some people even think the pinnacle for Stavesacre.—*Brandon Ebel (CEO, Tooth & Nail)*

9 mewithoutYou
Brother, Sister | Tooth & Nail | 2006

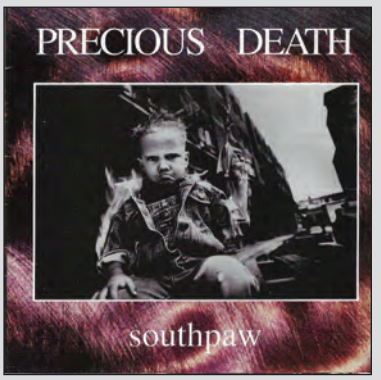
"There's another top three lyricist on the label as well, with Aaron. mewithoutYou was a surprise. We sign some bands that have remained extremely small on the label and that was a band, where you didn't necessarily know where they would go. They basically became a band that has a complete cult following. They got pretty big and are definitely one of the highlights for us as a label in my career putting out their records. Definitely a band with a lot of integrity and vision.—*Brandon Ebel*

10 Vengeance Rising
Human Sacrifice | Intense | 1989

You should have seen the Star Song sales reps pre-selling this album at the CBA Int'l convention before this one hit in '89. They were giddy yet clueless at the revolutionary prospect. Nothing has really come out before or since this album hit the scene. Awesome riffs played at breakneck speed, but just gnarly, groove-heavy riffs on their own. Tunes like "White Throne" and the title track are without question high water marks of the Christian metal scene. Has only one blemish (probably the worst audio engineering glitch of all time) – a bad vocal edit, which comes in at 2:02 during the song "Burn."—*DV*

11 Switchfoot
The Beautiful Letdown | Sparrow | 2003

An excerpt from HM#99 said this album was "perfectly titled ... and I'm not talking about the words 'the' or 'beautiful'..." I guess HM was wrong on that one, huh? —*DV*



12 Precious Death
Southpaw | Metro One | 1995

As inventive as Faith No More was to mainstream metal was this progressive release to the Christian metal scene. Mix Living Colour with Metallica and Cher on lead vocals. "Say what?" Exactly! —*DV*

13 Larry Norman
Only Visiting This Planet | Solid Rock | 1972

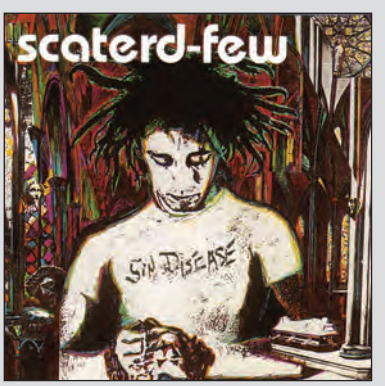
Let your history search start here with the grandaddy of Christian rock. The first of a killer trilogy, this album features excellent, witty, sharp and poignant lyrics. He's bold, blunt and street level (see "Why Don't You Look Into Jesus"). —*DV*

14 MUTEMATH
MUTEMATH | Warner Bros. | 2006

Cutting edge and even somewhat controversial, this is a landmark release and it simply blew people away with a fresh sound and world class songwriting. This album is so good it sounds like a major UK release. —*Dr. Tony Shore*

15 Adam Again
Ten Songs | Broken | 1988

For their sophomore effort, Gene Eugene took his band to the next level, mixing soul & funk with his edgy alternative rock leanings to come up with a record that is sophisticated and moving. —*Brian Quincy Newcomb*



16 Scaterd Few
Sin Disease | Alarma | 1990

One of the best records to ever come out of the 'punk' scene.
—*Caleb Olsen (Boot To Head Records)*

17 Sixpence None the Richer
Sixpence None the Richer | Squint | 1997

Everything about it – the friendships forged thru trials, the song cycle borne of artistic despair, the covert recording sessions, the extraordinary musicianship, the subsequent birth of Squint, and the album's eventual worldwide success – still seems like a miracle. —*Steve Taylor*

18 Tourniquet
Psycho Surgery | Intense | 1992

It's hard to pick between *Pathogenic Ocular Dissonance* or this one for this list, so we just flipped a medical thesaurus and it opened to *Psycho...* —*DV*

19 Daniel Amos
Doppelganger | Alarma! | 1983

I'd spent a couple years stretching my church friends (and radio listeners in Syracuse) with earlier DA, Mark Heard and Rez Band. When *Doppleganger* hit my desk, *I* was the one who got stretched. —*Chris Hauser*

We polled the experts and crunched the numbers, here are:

THE TOP 20 CHRISTIAN HIP-HOP ALBUMS OF ALL TIME

1. *Gang Affiliated* –Gospel Gangstaz
2. *After the Music Stops* –Lacrae
3. *Heaven's Mentality* –The Cross Movement
4. *The Earthworm* –LPG
5. *Christology* –Ambassador
6. *Redeemed Hoodlum* –T-Bone
7. *Composition No. 1* –L.A. Symphony
8. *Factors of the Seven* –Grits
9. *Phase III* –SFC
10. *Fashion Expo Round 1: TruHipHop* – Sackcloth Fashion
11. *Raw Material* –Mars Ill
12. *Shades of Grey* –Braille
13. *7th Avenue* –KJ-52
14. *Extra Credit* –Theory Hazit
15. *Traveling Circus* –RedCloud
16. *Experience* –Tunnel Rats
17. *No Plan B* –4th Avenue Jones
18. *Plague* –Dirt
19. *Bible Break* –Stephen Wiley
20. *Rain System EP* –Othello & Manwell

I think we were all into Jane's Addiction when we wrote that album. I thought we were really ahead of our time when we finished it, but listening back to it, you can defiantly hear the Seattle influence.
—Tim Taber

20 The Prayer Chain
Shawl | Rode Dog | 1993

Infectious, original, awesome and very musical. "Middlename," "Chick Magnet," "Cristalena" and "Move To Bremerton" are all still staples in a great live show.*—DV*

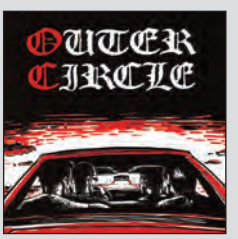
21 MxPx
Life In General | Tooth & Nail | 1996

Zao has had an amazing, prolific and brutal career thus far (both musically and personnel-wise), but this one really kicked into that heavy gear that helped define "metal-core."*—DV*

22 Zao
Where Blood & Fire Bring Rest | Solid State | 1998

Quite an original metal sound. Unforgettable tracks include the back-to-back "Crucify" and "Messiah," but evangelistic fervor meets metal in "Self-Destruction" and the ballad "Alone in Suicide."*—DV*

23 Bloodgood
Detonation | Frontline | 1987



Crucified frontman Mark Salomon tries his hand at old school punk here and knocks one out of the park. Every track rules. "Manifesto" is a rally 'round the microphone punk anthem.*—DV*

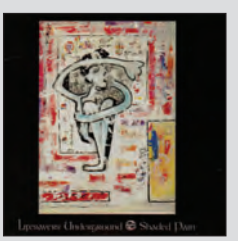
24 Outer Circle
Outer Circle | T&N | 1998

Lotsa people hate on Creed, but they perfected that classic rock formula of quieter verses exploding into huge power choruses better than most bands. I still like these songs.
—David Bach (Guardian)

25 Creed
Human Clay | Wind-Up | 1999

I loved this album. I remember them rehearsing these songs for a demo before they got signed to Geffen. They were such naturals at harmonizing. And with brutal metal underneath.
—Doug Pinnick

26 Galactic Cowboys
Galactic Cowboys | DGC | 1991



This monumental album puts the lie to the idea that Christian music has to be positive. Angry, confused, hurting and worn to a thin hot line, this punk record was about telling the cold hard truth about existence, while we "cling to the faith" ("Tether to Tassel") that "there is More to Life" than what we see.*—BQN*

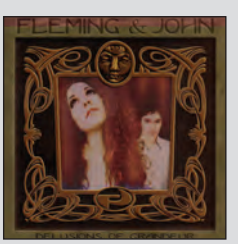
27 Lifesavers Underground
Shaded Pain | Frontline | 1987

As great as Chris Carrabba was with FSF, his leaving to go solo was an awesome decision. Hearing these bleeding-heart songs sung back to him from 1,000 voices in the audience in concert on this tour was a flat-out phenomenon.
—DV

28 Dashboard Confessional
The Places You Have Come to Fear the Most | Vagrant | 2001

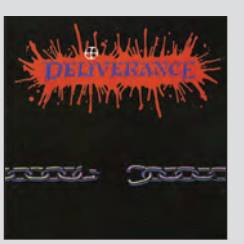
Listen to this album. It'll blow your mind. It's simplistic '80s metal to a fault (think Ratt with Jesus-first lyrics), but the shredding lead guitar by Rex Carroll in every fill, nook and cranny is primo.*—DV*

29 Whitecross
Whitecross | Pure Metal | 1987



Why this album didn't change the world is a crime. Fleming McWilliams' operatic vocal range and hubby John's adroit songwriting was an eclectic groove alt-rock match made in heaven.*—DV*

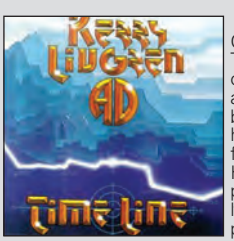
30 Fleming & John
Delusions of Grandeur | R.E.X. | 1995



"If You Will" into "The Call" is almost as good as metal gets."*—DV*

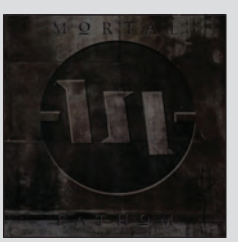
This record would forever change and impact me and the Christian metal music scene as we knew it!
—Bill Bafford (Roxx Prod.)

31 Deliverance
Deliverance | Intense | 1989



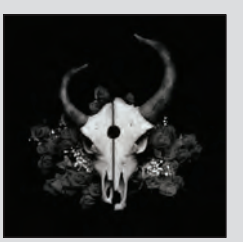
One of my fav albums. Two vocalists dancing over sideways, rhythmic and very electronic beats was a fresh and highwater mark in 1984 for a few ex-members of Kansas that wanted to pen intelligent Christian lyrics to thinking man's prog rock.*—DV*

32 Kerry Livgren AD
Time Line | CBS | 1984



Sonic brilliance, great hooks and killer riffs made "Alive and Awake," "Rift," Godspeed" and "Nepulsultra" stick in your head long after the tracks ended. Could be the most accessible industrial style music ever made by believers. *—DV*

33 Mortal
Fathom | Intense | 1993



A dynamic mix of the right amount of chaotic riffage, doomy low-end vocals, and singable choruses got this world-class album noticed in the mainstream.
—DV

34 Demon Hunter
Summer of Darkness | Solid State | 2004

Possibly *the* musical success story of 2009. Adam Young somehow crafted a dozen electronic songs in his parents' Minnesota basement that just ooze infectious joy. *—DV*

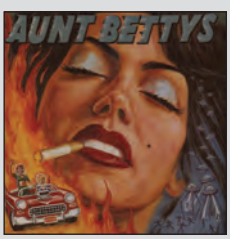
35 Owl City
Ocean Eyes | Universal Republic | 2009

Here's a terrific, inventive and dynamic metal album that was miraculously given time to build an audience and take off over the course of 3-4 years. One listen and you'll never doubt again if girls can do metal. *—DV*

36 Flyleaf
Flyleaf | Octone | 2005

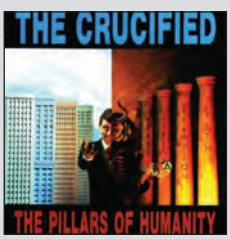
Perhaps this is what U2 might've sounded like if they had formed in a post-hardcore Orange County. A creative masterpiece and high mark that the band keeps threatening to top. Scary. *—DV*

37 Thrice
Vheissu | Island | 2005



Maybe we should just blame the marketing and radio promotions departments at Elektra for failing to make the song "Jesus" as memorable as a Nirvana hit. How could they have failed with material this good? *—DV*

38 Aunt Bettys
Aunt Bettys | Elektra | 1996



I would've never started playing drums, which led to me being in NIV & then to starting a label, if it wasn't for *Pillars*... *—Jason Dunn*

The Crucified is one of the reasons why I joined and started P.O.D.. *Pillars of Humanity* was the first "Christian" album I'd ever heard." *—Sonny Sandoval*

39 The Crucified
Pillars of Humanity | Ocean | 1992

The Alarm were one of my favorite bands back in the early '80s. I was so blown away by them using Marshall amps with acoustic guitars! They were so spiritual, but not preachy at all. They were an inspiration to me. *—Doug Pinnick*

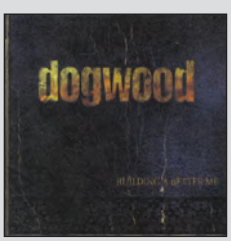
40 The Alarm
Strength | IRS | 1985

What a change from *Embrace the Eternal* to this album ... and what a killer song in "One Less Addiction." It was like a new band – an awesome, passionate and emotional new band. *—DV*

41 Embodyment
The Narrow Scope of Things | Solid State | 2000

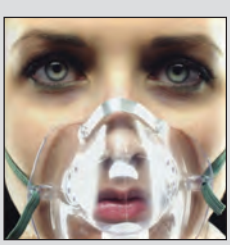
When Christians make art that blows people away with its creativity, skill and excellence ... well, isn't that the way it's supposed to be when people are in relation to the Creator? *Sanity Obscure* – case in point. *—DV*

42 Believer
Sanity Obscure | R.E.X. | 1991



I (originally) signed 'em, because I loved their heart. The way they connected with the kids was phenomenal. They made kids feel welcome all the time and they were pranksters. I loved that about them. *—Noah Bernardo, Sr.*

43 Dogwood
Building A Better Me | Tooth & Nail | 2000



I knew this was going to be a special record on hearing the demos. It brings back many fond memories of a great time in my life and marks the peak of my career at T&N. Without a doubt, this was a defining moment for Underoath. *—Chad Johnson (Come&Live)*

44 Underoath
They're Only Chasing Safety | Solid State | 2004

This record best captured the apex of their live energy and great songwriting. *—David Bach*

A turning point for the legitimacy of true hard rock in the Christian market (as opposed to overly premeditated/watered-down youth group filler). *Snakes*... was to Bride what *Appetite*... was to G 'n R. *—Dez Dickerson*

45 Bride
Snakes in the Playground | Star Song | 1992

On paper the idea sounds crazy: a hardcore frontman singing lyrics about Ma Barker over a Southern Rock/ metal hybrid ... but it's a marvelous thing. The ballad "Just Wanted to Make Mother Proud" could be today's "Free Bird." *—DV*

46 Maylene & the Sons of Disaster
I | Mono vs. Stereo | 2005

Hands down ... the most underrated Christian rock band of all time. This record is sick! Tim Bushong is one of the great unsung music geniuses of Christian rock. *—David Bach*

47 Lovewar
Soak Your Brain | Pakaderm | 1993

Confirmed that, inspite of life's challenges, "I Still Believe (Great Design)." And I find God's Spirit "Everywhere I Go." A masterful musical collection ... songs of thoughtful, often biblical imagery, they revealed you could write about profoundly spiritual themes in mainstream settings and rock with intentionality, cuz "we need all the hope that we can get." *—BQN*

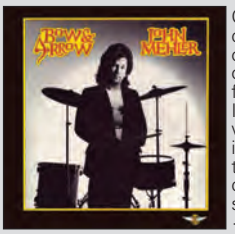
48 The Call
Reconciled | Elektra | 1986

Even though you could find this album's title track if you mashed "Self Esteem" with "Smells Like Teen Spirit," it is still a great rally cry for Christian rockers. The album had more than one good song, too. And it (thankfully) found them moving towards rock. *—DV*

49 dc Talk
Jesus Freak | Forefront | 1995

There are lots of songs in the annals of Christian rock history that almost elevate the album to classic status. Songs that are so good that they make up for, perhaps, weaker material elsewhere on the album. For this reason, we thought we'd suggest a mixtape for you culled from albums that didn't quite make this list (but might've come oh-so close just because of these songs).

"Run Mary Run" –Cush (S/T EP)
"The Blood" –Street Angel (S/T)
"My God" –Audio Adrenaline (S/T)
"The Devil is Bad" –The Ws (*Fourth From the Last*)
"The Vision" –Darrell Mansfield (*The Vision*)
"Fifty-Five" –Rod Laver (*Trying Not To Try*)
"Carry Me Down" –Demon Hunter (*Storm the Gates of Hell*)
"Loving You" –The R&R Worship Circus (*Welcome to…*)
"Strong Tower" –Phil Keaggy (*Find Me in These Fields*)
"Dreams" –Recon (*Behind Enemy Lines*)
"Oh, Lord, You're Beautiful" –The Insyderz (*Skalleluia!*)
"Without Eyes" –Veil of Ashes (*Pain*)
"Big Boys" –Flock 14 (*Brave New World?*)
"Don't Say Suicide" –Rick Cua (*You're My Road*)
"Rock Stars on H" – Mike Knott (*Strip Cycle*)
"Shut Off" –Puller (*Sugarless*)
"Save Me" –Rich Mullins (S/T)
"Nice Guy" – Fell Venus (*@*)
"Breakaway" – Idle Cure (S/T)
"Shine" –Newsboys (*Going Public*)
"Elle" – Avion (*White Noise*)
"Bow" – Focused (*Bow*)



Got this record when it came out. Still have it on vinyl! It was ahead of its time musically for Christian music. It sounded secular, which was a no-no in Christendom back then. Times have truly changed, and this record stands the test of time. *—Doug Pinnick*

50 John Mehler
Bow & Arrow | A&S | 1982

Sounds classic even though it's only two years old. Organic piano rock with grit, soul and a voice (in Aaron Morgan) that'll fill a room. *—DV*

51 Seabird
'Til We See the Shore | Credential | 2008

I was the Myrrh Records promotion guy when they got signed. We all had very high hopes for them. They had Stryper's old manager and ably played all the LA clubs where Poison and Van Halen got their starts. We had a couple #1's – and the band was the first ever color cover of HM Mag! *—Chris Hauser*

52 Holy Soldier
Holy Soldier | Myrrh | 1990

With each album David Bazan was able to break through my defenses, disarm my guards and inject a good dose of truth into my life. *Control* was one of those records. *—Caleb Olsen*

53 Pedro The Lion
Control | Jade Tree | 2002

The song "Flood" was one of those surprises that catapulted this band of college friends all over mainstream radio, giving this skilled group of songwriters a healthy career that's thankfully still going. *—DV*

54 Jars of Clay
Jars of Clay | Essential | 1995

Scott Albert's an industrial music genius – fusing the power of metal, dance grooves and noise sampling. His second opus was originally released as a side-project called Brainchild, but later re-released as a Circle of Dust album. *—DV*

55 Brainchild
Mindwarp | R.E.X. | 1994

This thing is chock full of hits, which weren't even exhausted on radio, but helped make them *Warped Tour* darlings. Critics should note that these songs would sound great with a guy singing 'em and the girl that does belt 'em out ain't no slouch, either. *—DV*

56 Paramore
Riot! | Fueled by Raman | 2007

Shock rock, raw rock and dance rock all came together (with a sense of humor, too) for one great album here. *—DV*

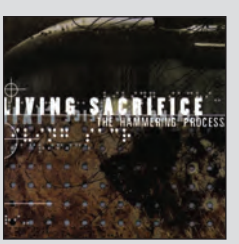
57 Showbread
Age of Reptiles | Tooth & Nail | 2006

After refining its sound with the fantastic *Never Take Friendship Personal*, Anberlin was able to top themselves with a great collection of songs (like "Adelaide," "Godspeed" and "The Unwinding Cable Car"), including the über-epic "Fin." *—DV*

58 Anberlin
Cities | Tooth & Nail | 2007

Two of the most talented artists ever to be involved with Christian music come together on this classic release from one of the most underrated bands... Jason Martin's Starflyer. *Leave Here A Stranger* was produced by Terry Taylor. They are all good but this record is a shining star in a discography of artistic brilliance. *—Dr. Tony Shore*

59 Starflyer 59
Leave Here A Stranger | Tooth & Nail | 2001



Reborn could just as easily be sitting here, but the band expanded its personnel and its sound once again for this album, achieving another brilliant musical breakthrough. *—DV*

60 Living Sacrifice
The Hammering Process | Solid State | 2000

This was our sophomore and transition album with new members, label and producers. Still sounds decent after all these years. This album is still the anchor of our live set to this day. *—David Bach*

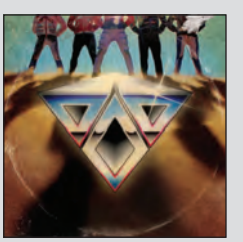
61 Guardian
Fire And Love | Pakaderm | 1991

On this, their second album, 441 crystalized that dreamy male vocalist new wave sound (a la Duran Duran, Simple Minds, Paul Young) to perfection, adding heartfelt joy and an innocent worshipfulness that was magic. *—DV*

62 441
Mourning Into Dancing | Blue Collar | 1986

Mortification alum Jayson Sherlock adopts the alias of Anonymous and records *the* album to kick off a Christocentric infiltration of black metal culture. Purported death threats and the mistaken idea that Sherlock meant to lampoon the music's unrelenting evil follow, but the one-man act's lone studio album holds up as a righteously furious assault. *—Jamie Lee Rake*

63 Horde
Hellig Usvart | Rowe Productions | 1994



The word "crunk" might as well have a photo of FF5 next to it in the dictionary. This album could very well be that genre's best. These 11 songs sure stand up well. *—DV*

64 Family Force 5
Dance Or Die | Tooth & Nail | 2008

65 Jerusalem
Warrior | Lion & Lamb | 1982

This Swedish hard rock band hit on all cylinders with "Man of the World" and "Constantly Changing," but were revolutionary with its epic 12-minute "Sodom."—*DV*

66 Lone Justice
Shelter | Geffen | 1986

Maria McKee remains one of my faves to this day and I keep this album near me at all times. As a teen it was "I Found Love" and "Reflected" that rocked me. As an adult, "Dixie Storms" slows me in my tracks every time I hear it.—*John J. Thompson*

67 Petra
Back to the Streets | Star Song | 1986

After several albums of being "pretty good" musically, this first album with veteran vocalist John Schlitt was flat-out arena rock great. Check out "Shakin' The House."—*DV*

68 Midnight Oil
Diesel and Dust | Columbia | 1988

Peter Garrett's intense political concerns about the environment, justice for aboriginals in Australia, and a world gone war-mad gives this breakthrough for Midnight Oil the furious energy of Hebrew prophets like Hosea and Amos. Aggressive, engaged, intense.—*BQN*

69 The Violet Burning
Strength | Bluestone | 1992

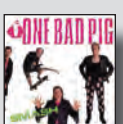
Strength just plain blew us all away. From the Tubbs brothers' version of the band (precision with passion) to Pritzl's chemical presence behind the front mic, this was worship music like I had never heard. Graceful, intense, evocative, sensual and soulful, in all the right places. Brilliance.—*JJT*

70 Undercover
Balance of Power | Brainstorm Artists International | 1990

I grew up on the fun punk anthems of Undercover, but *Balance of Power* marks a high point for the band with a very mature and artistic sound and it's still my personal favorite from a very amazing band.—*Dr. Tony Shore*

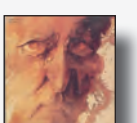
71 Matthew Ward
Armed and Dangerous | Live Oak | 1986

The one male voice in the pretty, petite trio 2nd Chapter of Acts, you might never guess he could wail like Steve Walsh, but this album did that – with Dann Huff's guitar shredding all over it, too.—*DV*



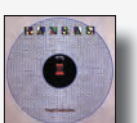
72 One Bad Pig
Smash | Pure Metal | 1989

Birthed out of Austin's early '80s punk scene, this album captured that spirit with tunes like "Isaiah 6," "Frat Rats," "Looney Tune" and "Let's Be Frank."—*DV*



73 Jeff Johnson
Shadowplay | Ark | 1983

It's amazing that music this experimental was ever distributed into the CBA. Take the trippiness of Pink Floyd, Alan Parsons and meld it with deep lyrics inspired by C.S. Lewis, George MacDonald, etc, and you're in prog rock heaven. Total sonic excellence from the pre-digital era.—*DV*



74 Kansas
Vinyl Confessions | Kirshner | 1982

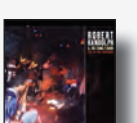
When the songwriter behind "Dust in the Wind" found Jesus, it was a big deal to us Christian rockers. This was Kerry's second post-conversion Kansas album and the first with vocalist John Elefante.—*DV*

75 Novella
A Liquid Earth | Star Song | 1992

Songs like "Missionary," "Bad Place" and "Don't You Run" resonate with a hopeful melodic sweetness and an arena rock thunder a la Journey in their heyday.—*DV*

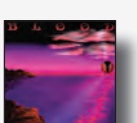
76 Magdallan
Big Bang | Intense | 1992

We were trying to set new standards in Christian rock in hopes to inspire others to do the same. Something bulletproof the world would have a hard time demoting to irrelevancy like they do with most all Christian Music. I pray we did that and am still proud of that album.—*Ken Tamplin*



77 Robert Randolph & The Family Band
Live at the Wetlands | Dare | 2002

Robert Randolph and his Family Band introducing us all to the "sacred steel" genre is easily one of the best things to happen with rock guitar in the past decade (or two).—*DV*



78 Red Sea
Blood | Rugged | 1994

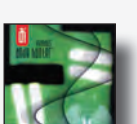
Led Zeppelin. Whitesnake. Red Sea.—*DV*

79 Sacred Warrior
Obsessions | Intense | 1991

On its fourth album this power metal band tweaked its Maiden/Queensryche sound more towards the *Operation Mindcrime* spectrum. In 1991 this was the perfect decision. —*DV*

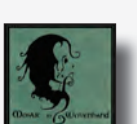
80 Sufjan Stevens
Illinoise | Asthmatic Kitty | 2005

In his second of a 50-state project, this prolific songwriter became an overnight critic's darling. The esoteric excellence of these songs are reason why.—*DV*



81 Andy Hunter
Exodus | Nettwerk | 2002

Hunter's debut intersects the notion of DJ-led praise & worship with authentically club-banging techno/trance textures for the rare sanctified dance music project to rock listeners for whom the disco is their church. US Christian label patronage would move on, but not before leaving this scintillating classic.—*Jamie Lee Rake*



82 Wovenhand
Mosaic | Sounds Familyre | 2006

Any fan of great songwriting and alternative music will love this release. It is simply one of the most original and beautiful albums I've ever heard. The instrumentation and melodies will leave you wanting more. The fact that this is an independent release makes it that much more amazing.—*Dr. Tony Shore*

"Kites Without Strings"
– The Seventy Sevens (S/T)
"Keep Me Runnin'"
–Randy Stonehill (*Welcome to Paradise*)
"'Church of Do What You Want to"
–Jacobs Trouble (*Door Into Summer*)
"The Suffering Servant"
–Leviticus (*Setting Fire to the Earth*)

"Duane Joseph"
–the Juliana Theory (*Understand this is a Dream*)
"Baroquen Spirits"
–Larry Norman (*So Long Ago the Garden*)
"Three Nails"
–Undercover (*Boys & Girls Renounce the World*)
"Ecumenical"
–Black Eyed Sceva (*50,000 Miles Davis*)

"Up from the Wasteland"
–AD (*Art of the State*)
"Escher's World"
–Chagall Guevara (S/T)
"Wind at My Back"
–Spock's Beard (*Snow*)
"A Little Love"
–The Brave (*Battle Cries*)

"Unicornicopia"
–Joy Electric (*the White Songbook*)
"It's Hard to Take"
–The Front (S/T)
"Train"
–Jet Circus (Step On It)
"Goldilox"
–King's X (*Out of the Silent Planet*)

"Every New Day"
–Five Iron Frenzy (*Our Newest Album Ever*)
"Who's Who Here?"
–Daniel Amos (*Mr. Buechner's Dream*)
"The Murder Weapon"
–T Bone Burnett (*Proof Through The Night*)
"Valerie"
–Sweet Comfort Band (*Cutting Edge*)

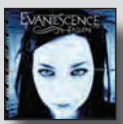
"Sodom & America"
–XL & DBD (*Sodom & America*)
"Shelter Me"
–Balance of Power (*Perfect Balance*)
"Is It A Crime?"
–Zion (*Thunder from the Mountain*)
"Gotta Serve Somebody"
–Bob Dylan (*Slow Train Coming*)

"Six Feet Under"
–Applehead (*Meaning*)

See an even longer mixtape list at HMMAG.COM

83 Vigilantes of Love
Audible Sigh | Compass | 2000

A decade into it, Bill Mallonee's VoL appeared to find its mojo working with producer Buddy Miller, a way to connect his strong poetic lyrics to potent musical settings. Emmylou Harris sings harmony on "Resplendent," one of the best songs of his canon. "Nothing Like a Train" and "Could Be a Whole Lot Worse" make this a prime exhibit of the portent in his literate songwriting.—*BQN*



84 Evanescence
Fallen | Wind-Up | 2003

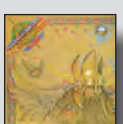
15 Million copies of this album have sold worldwide. Not bad for a band that had sent its independently released *Origin* demo CD to this magazine two years prior.—*DV*

85 Comeback Kid
Turn It Around | Facedown | 2003

Sometimes the best bands and albums are created as a fun outlet – an experiment based upon musical hunches, passion and a hunger. Such was the wonderful surprise of this first chant-along album by some of these former members of Figure Four.—*DV*

86 Project 86
Drawing Black Lines | BEC | 2000

With its second album Project 86 punched nu metal in the gut with real metal. The band's been as consistent as ever with each release, but this one remains a fan favorite and live set staple.—*DV*

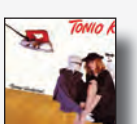


87 Arkangel
Warrior | Star Song | 1980

This might be the best album in the entire universe. Art/prog rock from 1980. Imagine Jethro Tull, Rush, Kansas and ELP rolled into one. "Warrior" is perhaps the best hippie worship song ever.—*DV*

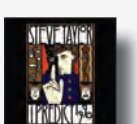
88 Skillet
Comatose | Ardent | 2006

After years of being "pretty good for Christian rock" they can now stand toe-to-toe with any mainstream rock band and kill it. "Falling Inside the Black" and "Rebirthing" both soar.—*DV*



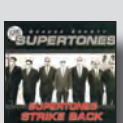
89 Tonio K
Romeo Unchained | What? | 1986

At a point when most of Christian music sounded the same and had to meet certain lyrical requirements, along came artistic genius Tonio K with quirky avant-garde sounds and lyrics that were way too honest and intelligent for the masses.—*Dr. Tony Shore*



90 Steve Taylor
I Predict 1990 | Myrrh | 1987

There was so much controversy surrounding this album – the cover, the content, the store boycotts, the cancelled Australian tour – that in retrospect, I'm amazed it was ever released.—*Steve Taylor*

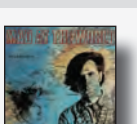


91 OC Supertones
Supertones Strike Back | BEC | 1997

Kings of ska's third wave? Possibly so. Along with FIF at least able to make a claim towards the crown. Fiesty, fun and fast. Four of these songs made it on their just-released best-of, *ReUnite*.—*DV*

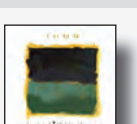
92 Allies
Long Way From Paradise | Dayspring | 1989

Dayspring Records probably never knew what hit 'em. These veteran rockers let it all bang out on this blues hard rock opus with greats like "Devil is a Liar," the title track, "Old Man Down" and "Christian Man."—*DV*



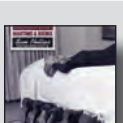
93 Mad At The World
Mad At The World | Frontline | 1987

This album stretched the mostly empty boundaries of what was really cool and "edgy" in Christian music at a time when the only other genre doing that was metal.—*DV*



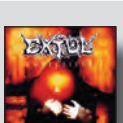
94 Iona
Beyond These Shores | Forefront | 1993

Don't say "Enya clone" until you've heard this band's songs. It's like Dream Theater minus the metal. Progressive yet beautiful and moving. Joanne Hogg's vocals soar on "Treasure" and "Burning Like Fire."—*DV*



95 Sam Phillips
Martinis & Bikinis | Virgin | 1994

The artist fka Leslie Phillips perfected her songcraft on this album, with powerful tunes like "Black Sky" "Baby, I Can't Please You" "I Need Love" the trippy ballad "Strawberry Road" and the Lennon cover of "Gimme Some Truth."—*DV*

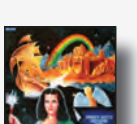


96 Extol
Undeceived | Solid State | 2000

Burial introduced us to these Nordic Viking metallers, but *Undecieved* kicked it up even another notch.—*DV*

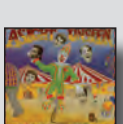
97 Degarmo & Key
Straight On | Lion & Lamb | 1979

"Livin' on the Edge of Dyin'" could've been an outtake from Springsteen's *Born to Run* album. And "Enchirdion," "Long Distance Runner" and "Jericho" ain't no slouches, either.—*DV*



98 Jimmy Hotz
Beyond the Crystal Sea | Vision | 1980

The guy who produced Arkangel's album self-released his own solo album around the same time. It's classic prog rock in the vein of acid rockers like Yes. Lots of atmospheric and space rock keyboards.—*DV*



99 Asight Unseen
Circus of Shame | New Breed | 1991

From out of nowhere this young band rocked with a veteran confidence and swagger. Influenced from a myriad of sources, like rockabilly, grunge, The Cult, STP, Jane's Addiction. And how can you go wrong when you write a song called "Jimi Jones Boogie?"—*DV*

100 PAX217
TwoSeventeen | Forefront | 2000

I would love to say I discovered and signed this band, but one of my A&R guys (Mark Nicholas) scouted them and chased down Howard Benson to produce. "Prism" is still one of the best Christian rock songs ever.—*David Bach*

ROBERT RANDOLPH &THE FAMILY BAND

Photo: Danny Clinch

IMPENDING DOOM AREN'T SUGARCOATING ANYTHING, AND THEY AREN'T AFRAID TO SPEAK THEIR MINDS. IN A TIME WHEN MANY BANDS ARE AFRAID OF THE EFFECTS BEING LABELED A "CHRISTIAN BAND" WILL HAVE ON THEIR CAREERS, THE GUYS IN IMPENDING DOOM AREN'T AFRAID TO CALL IT WHAT IT IS. "WE ARE A CHRISTIAN BAND," BASSIST DAVID SITTIG SAYS BLUNTLY. "WE DEFINITELY LET THAT BE KNOWN. YOU CAN CALL US A METAL BAND OR WHATEVER, BUT THE TRUE MEANING BEHIND IT ALL IS THAT WE ARE A CHRISTIAN BAND."

BYTIM HARRIS

[L-R: Brandon Trahan, Cory Johnson, Brook Reeves, David Sittig. Photo: Chad Sengstock]

But comparisons to most Christian bands are null and void as soon as you press play. In the middle of the track, "Violence" off of their upcoming record, *There Will Be Violence*, Brook Reeves screams, "For the unbelievers who repeatedly try to retain their faith in humanity, I promise there will be violence."

This brand of honesty, alongside Impending Doom's unwavering commitment to their beliefs and their relentless work ethic, has helped the band build respect and credibility in the scene. Sittig explains, "We do way more tours with secular bands for sure, because there just aren't that many Christian bands in our genre out there. We just toured with August Burns Red at the end of last year and that was probably my favorite tour. That was awesome. So, we definitely love touring with Christian bands, too. The secular bands we've toured a lot with, like White Chapel and The Acacia Strain and Unearth... They are all awesome dudes. They aren't judgmental at all in any way. They respect our beliefs, and we respect them as well."

The band recently went into Lambesis Studios with producer Daniel Castleman to record *There Will Be Violence*, which is due out July 20th.

"We went with Daniel Castleman for the new album, because we loved working with him on *The Serpent Servant*, so we had to come back," Sittig says.

The Serpent Servant was released in March of '09 to rave reviews, hitting number 3 on the *Heatseekers* chart, and the band wanted to build on that success.

"We wanted to do another quick album," Sittig says. "There was a lot of stuff from the last CD that we had left over that didn't get to make the last record because of time and we just had a lot of stuff ready to go, so we just started writing immediately, and we're just like, 'Dude, let's just go ahead and record another record.'"

Impending Doom challenged themselves musically on the new album, but didn't stray far from the path. "There are a couple of new things on this record," Sittig says. "It's a mix of the past two records. There is some really super fast, straight-to-the-point stuff that sounds like maybe it would be on *Nailed. Dead. Risen.* and then there's stuff that sounds like *The Serpent Servant* as well. And then there are a couple of new things that we tried with this record. So it's a way more diverse record, we kind of combined it all into one CD. It's very angry. It's very emotional. It's got it all."

The opening track, "Hell Breaks Loose" is a one-word instrumental introduction. The onslaught of chugging guitars and pounding drums pauses just long enough for Brook to whisper, "Silence," but there is very little silence over the next 35 minutes. Like most death metal bands, Impending Doom frequently uses dark imagery and lyrics that speak of death and tribulation. However, there is a light at the end of the tunnel, and they want everyone to see it.

"The meaning behind the title is that times are coming to an end and you can't put faith in mankind and this world for salvation," David explains. "It's only in God. In the end, you know, it's just a brutally honest record, that there will be violence, that there will be chaos. That's the entire concept of the album."

Earlier this year, the band went through their own trials. Two founding members, guitarist Manny Contreras and drummer Isaac Bueno, both left on good terms, but left the band with a huge gap to fill. "It was actually really smooth," Sittig says of the transition process. "We're great friends; we still talk to them all the time. We thought it was time for us to move on and they felt the same way too, so we both agreed on it. It was very smooth. We love those dudes. They're off doing their things now and we're doing our thing. We wish nothing but the best for them."

Surprisingly, they haven't missed a beat. *There Will Be Violence* has a natural progression from

"The meaning behind the title is that times are coming to an end and you can't put faith in mankind and this world for salvation."

the first two albums, so fear not Doom fans, Manny and Isaac's departure didn't leave the band without songwriters.

"Corey and I wrote the entire new record," David says, "and our good friend Branden, who's now in the band, tracked the drums. He did an amazing job. We couldn't have gotten it any better with any other drummer."

David explains that this is very similar to the writing process that they had for previous records.

"With the first record there were a lot of songs on our EP that we just rerecorded, mainly with *Nailed. Dead. Risen*. we had one writer for the music, and then we started writing *The Serpent Servant* and that all changed. That was me and then our guitarist Corey and our guitarist Manny writing everything. It was an even, three-way process. Then with this record, Manny stepped down before we had any of the record written, so it was the same as it was in the past, Corey and I doing most of the writing."

"There's a bunch of surprises with this new record as well," David says. "There are a couple of guest vocalists that we're super stoked on and more people can get into this album 'cause it's more diverse. We're really excited about this album and what it's gonna do."

Impending Doom plan to take their new record on the road this summer with the *Thrash and Burn Tour.* After that, they'll hit the Christian festivals like Icthus, Cornerstone and RevGen. For Impending Doom, the road is where they reap the rewards of doing what they love – interacting with broken people.

"We just want to be there for the broken kids who have nowhere else to go," Sittig says. "They turn to all these other things, and we want to be there for them to turn to us, so we can talk to them or hang out with them, and say anything encouraging to them, that's our whole thing. There's definitely a lot of time to talk to kids after shows, and when kids come up to talk and say that we're bringing them closer to God and it's through our music, 'cause we don't stand on stage and preach anyone's ears off, that alone just excites all of us. That's a huge reason why we're in a band."

It's not only the kids they impact; when you're on tour for weeks at a time, you have a huge opportunity to make an impact in the lives of the other band members as well.

"When we're on tour with bands we just try to set a good example for them, and without pushing anything on them we just want them to know that you can come talk to us," Sittig says. "There's been multiple times when members of bands that you would not expect to want anything to do with God would come up to us privately and just talk to us about God."

It's obvious that the guys in Impending Doom take what they do very seriously, but they make sure to have a lot of fun along the way. They've become increasingly well known for their "repentagram," a symbol they introduced sometime around the release of *The Serpent Servant.* Unfortunately, some people have taken it out of context and made it a bigger deal than it's supposed to be.

"Yeah, anything we really do, we get more hate from other Christians, surprisingly," Sittig says with a chuckle. "It's weird, but people will just look at something like that and say, 'Oh, that looks like a pentagram, that must be satanic.' Then there are some people that think there is some deep meaning behind it and, really? All it is, is Brook being really bored, and off the top of his head he comes up with the repentagram or 'goreship,'" another term they coined that has gotten some flack from the Christian music community. "We just had an artist make that little design. There's no deep meaning. It's just the words repent and pentagram put together, that's as deep as it gets."

They aren't trying to form a new cult, or start a huge movement; they're having fun in their down time. Minds have plenty of time to wander when you spend so much time on the road. "There are some times when people look too hard into it, and we're just regular dudes just making up dumb words," Sittig says. "We do take ourselves seriously to a point, but we're really laid-back dudes, and the last thing we ever want anyone to think is that we are difficult to talk to. We love talking with everybody, and just being friends with people that are atheist, or satanic, or anything. We just want to get the point across that we are just regular dudes like you, just come hang out."

They mean it. The last time I saw them play at a local venue in New Jersey called the Aquifer, they hung out with kids for three hours after the show was over. These guys have humble attitudes that escape many bands at this point in their careers. I recently saw a blog on Brook Reeves' MySpace page titled "Mission Statement," so I asked David if Impending Doom had a mission statement.

"We just love our fans, we love the kids, whether they love us, or love God in return," Sittig says. "We just love them to death. Our whole thing is that we just want to be there for everyone." Reaching everyone is a monumental task, but I have a feeling that after the release of *There Will Be Violence*, Impending Doom's crowds will be bigger than ever, and they'll be hanging out with more kids and more bands than ever before. At this rate it looks like there is nothing but impending success in this band's future.

✖

Photo: Chad Sengstock

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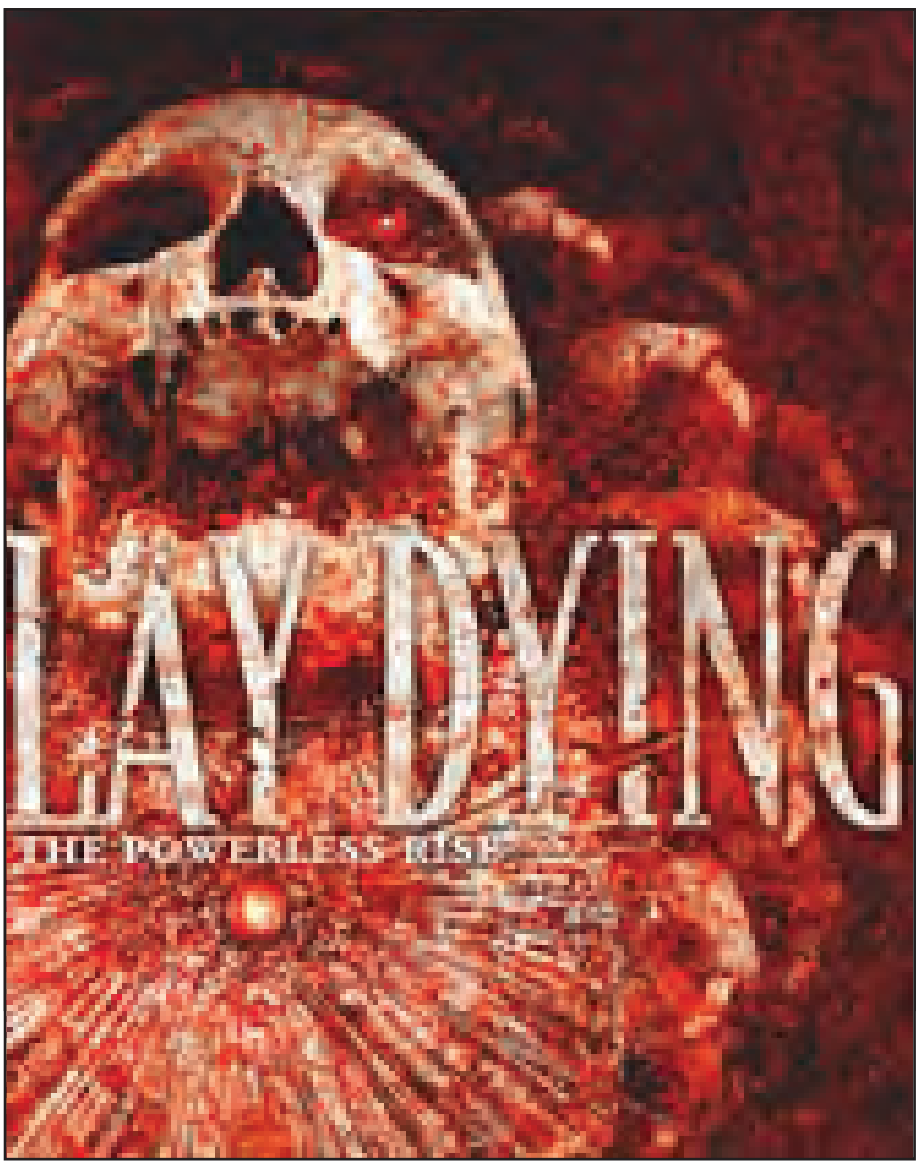


AS I LAY DYING
THE POWERLESS RISE

I saw As I Lay Dying when they were headlining the *Sounds of the Underground Tour* with metal heavyweights Cannibal Corpse, In Flames and GWAR. What set them apart was how tight and clean their set was. Even the stage was physically clean. AILD's licks were incredibly tight and the band worked as a cohesive unit, which is a necessity for a metal band. Every song had a plan and a purpose, and the band executed it to a 'T'.

That's how *The Powerless Rise* is: clean, tight, well-executed, with purpose. The production by Killswitch's Adam D gave the band more life and depth on this release than the previous record, *An Ocean Between Us*. Most of the credit, however, is due to the technical skill and songwriting the band has brought forth. Unfortunately, there aren't quite enough memorable tracks to take the record to a new level, further separating AILD from their peers. There are standouts, though. "Parallels" has an incredible guitar theme, while "Anondyne Sea" boasts well-placed riffs and good song dynamics.

Despite the band's great technical skill and impressive musicianship, some of the other songs on the album seem to conform to the generic sing/scream/sing structure that's over-saturated the scene in the past half-decade. The record is without a doubt enjoyable. However, despite the amount of respect AILD wield, I wanted to see them push the envelope and lead the charge into a new era with *The Powerless Rise,* rather than take baby steps towards it.

~~[METAL BLADE] DAVID STAGG~~

Rating system

05 *CLASSIC*
04 *FABULOUS*
03 *SOLID*
02 *SUSPECT*
01 *AMISS*
***** *1/2*

TO SPEAK OF WOLVES

MYSELF < LETTING GO

Fusing hardcore with a steady progression of clean vocals, To Speak of Wolves introduce a powerful message: to rise from your past and stare guilt in the face. While they aren't introducing anything new to the metalcore scene musically, their sound is still refreshing. The best attribute of their Solid State debut is the band's ability to vary their sound. Just when you have grasped the overall tone of the music, a song like "Quercus Alba" infects your ears with something completely different. Standing out for all the right reasons, the intro to this track is slow and vocally rich and the instruments are steady and light, breaking down the comely, forceful screams and demanding a presence in this delicate offering. [SOLID STATE] BIANCA MONTES

IMPENDING DOOM

THERE WILL BE VIOLENCE

With more melody than *Nailed. Dead. Risen.* and more direction than *The Serpent Servant*, Impending Doom's latest release has moved the newly-rebuilt four-piece to a whole new level of dominance in the metal scene. *There Will Be Violence* is everything the title would lead you to believe – pitch black and unapologetically aggressive. Brook Reeves is authoritative and articulate, the latter giving him a huge leg up on the band's older material and most deathcore bands today. The album features guest vocals from As I Lay Dying's Tim Lambesis and Vincent Bennett of The Acacia Strain. Lambesis adds a great layer of depth to his track, "Orphans." It's crisp and relentless, while Bennett's presence on "The Great Fear" is felt immediately. "The Great Fear" goes for the throat from the opening line and refuses to step back until it has left listeners pummeled in the best possible way. My only issue with *There Will Be Violence*, and deathcore in general, is that it's essentially thirty-four minutes of blast beats and distorted chugs, which isn't necessarily a bad thing. *There Will Be Violence* is so unforgiving that it has to be handled in small doses; otherwise, listeners may have to crawl away. [FACEDOWN] NATHAN DOYLE

CALL TO PRESERVE

LIFE OF DEFIANCE

The first words from singer John Ellis are a blatant declaration of Call to Preserve's mission – a challenge to be set apart. This record covers a wide variety of topics: from living a life of humility to living the gospel of love, to not using fear tactics to preach the gospel of hate, to letting go of the weight of our trials and giving it to God. "Functionary" illustrates how substance abuse can hurt a person and everything around them. "Across The Aisle" features a guest appearance by Joe Musten of Advent. Question: Is that song sick? Answer: Yes, it rules hard. Call to Preserve puts out better records with each release, and *Life of Defiance* is no exception. [FACEDOWN] ROB SHAMELESS

A PLEA FOR PURGING

THE MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell is absolutely punishing. For 40 minutes the newest Plea album ebbs and flows from the aggressive discord of "The Eternal Female" to a haunting hymn in "The Jealous Wings." The band's third release on Facedown Records refuses to sit stagnant. *Marriage* crunches like shattered glass underfoot and layers a thick experimental ambience on top of every chug. This disc rises and falls like any great mix tape, reaching for the highest peaks of Heaven and the lowest pits of Hell. Plea's commitment to keeping it heavy, while striving to separate themselves from every other breakdown, results in an engaging full-length with plenty of room for pile-ons. *Marriage* will leave you pumped. [FACEDOWN] NATHAN DOYLE

SINCE OCTOBER

LIFE, SCARS, APOLOGIES

Diminishing the driving and emotionally charged lyrics from their debut release, Since October dive into the sappier side of music with *Life, Scars, Apologies*. The album addresses an inner battle and plays out the struggles of life with a less-than-impressive lyrical display that fails to rouse any emotion. While most of the album carries a considerable drop in tempo, Since October still manage to deliver high-energy tracks like "Life of Mine." The album climax, "The Show," fills the missing gap in *Life* by infecting your ears with contagious vocals and pounding instrumentals. With the acoustic closer "Don't Follow," Since October demonstrate their ability to create something beautiful from something very simple. The well-placed accents of a harmonica and the fervid guitar allow you to fall in love with the band all over again. [TOOTH & NAIL] BIANCA MONTES

AMBER PACIFIC

VIRTUES

Listening to *Virtues* is like babysitting a toddler. It never holds still, gets into everything, and while you know what you should expect, you never really know what they're going to do next. Amber Pacific has released a perfectly respectable pop/rock album. "The Best Mistake" is horribly catchy, despite a few eye-rolling lyrics, and the band channels Coheed with the middle track, "Conviction." The song highlights *Virtues*' greatest strength; producer Martin Feveyear made the album sound absolutely huge. These songs are meant to be played in big venues and on big speakers. *Virtues* may not be this year's best pop/rock release, but it is certainly worth forty-three minutes of your time. [VICTORY] NATHAN DOYLE

SARAH JAFFE

SUBURBAN NATURE

Raw and organic, the opening vocals of singer/songwriter Sarah Jaffe liberate any preconceived notions of who a woman should be. Rather than trying to fit her sound into a snug box, this truth singer wields freedom in her honest and simple vocals. Pulling away from a full band, this acousticallly driven album showcases the unlimited range of the artist. Not to miss her chance on diversion, the fully orchestrated "Better Than Nothing" sweeps you away in the chorus as Jaffe sings to you, "What happens to the old girl, what happens to the boy? I see their eyelids moving." [KIRKLAND] BIANCA MONTES

HOUSE OF HEROES

SUBURBA

Columbus, Ohio's House of Heroes wear ambition well on their arena-sized fourth LP, *Suburba*. Kinetic opener "Relentless" encapsulates the sprawling sound of the album. The keyboard-laden intro recalls vintage The Who, while frontman Tim Skipper employs Freddie Mercury-style vocal theatrics on the choruses. The rest of the album never quite reaches the soaring heights of the opener, but there are plenty of moments that come close. "Disappear" rides gorgeous, reverb-heavy verses into a triumphant coda; "Independence Day for a Petty Thief" features a deliciously funky solo break; and closer "Burn Me Down" approaches Muse-level bombast with its shimmering keys and anthemic refrain. Producer Mark Lee Townsend (Relient K, Deas Vail) polishes House of Heroes' guitars to a radiant sparkle and layers on chain-gang vocals and multiple harmonies. The end result is an impressive disc that seems to beg for its own Broadway musical. [GOTEE] JEFF SISTRUNK

Ratings

	DV	Writer
As I Lay Dying *The Powerless Rise*	04	03*
To Speak of Wolves *Myself < Letting Go*	04	04
Impending Doom *There Will Be Violence*	04	03*
Call To Preserve *Life of Defiance*	03	04
A Plea for Purging *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*	04	04*
Since October *Life, Scars, Apologies*	03	03
Amber Pacific *Virtues*	03*	03*
Sarah Jaffe *Suburban Nature*	03*	03
House of Heroes *Suburba*	04	04
Petree *Weakness Makes You Beautiful*	03*	04
Confide *Recover*	04	03*
Haste the Day *Attack of the Wolf King*	04	04
Children 18:3 *Rains 'a Comin'*	03*	03
Various Artists *Punk Goes Classic Rock*	03	
Norma Jean *Meridional*	04	04
My Epic *Yet*	03	04*
Mae *(a)fternoon*	04	02*

PETREE

WEAKNESS MAKES YOU BEAUTIFUL

Petree vocalist Stephen Petree (formerly of Shiny Toy Guns) wastes no time capturing the listener with his lyrically interesting and musically agile sound. Mixing together the sounds of alternative and pop, this Los Angeles-based trio delivers a solid offering of magnetic hits, including the upbeat track "She Set It," which has been featured on MTV's *The Hills*. While some critics might fault Petree's new band for sounding a bit too much like his former outfit, Shiny Toy Guns, I find the electrifying honesty and talent of this band to shine bright. Petree is signed to the relatively new Dream Records, which is attached to the Los Angeles ministry The Dream Center. The band will be donating a portion of all proceeds to that cause. [DREAM] BIANCA MONTES

CONFIDE

RECOVER

Confide's sophomore release presents a bit of a crisis. *Recover* has plenty of great hooks and is heavy in all the right places. The wonderfully layered "Tighten It Up" offers great alternating lines between the dual vocalists. The album piles sweet melodies and Joel Piper's clean vocals on top of Ross Kenyon's roar, but the formula makes the songs bleed together like an art lesson in water color. On one hand, *Recover* presents 12 tracks of Ebola-catchy post-hardcore; on the other, after 12 tracks, the same repetitive formula gets a little sickening. The album is fast-paced and never lets up, but instead of a constant ascent into the great unknown, it quickly plateaus into the expected. Like much of the genre, *Recover* is a fun album but lacks the punch and staying power of a great release. [TRAGIC HERO] NATHAN DOYLE

HASTE THE DAY

ATTACK OF THE WOLF KING

Six years after their debut, *Burning Bridges*, Haste the Day look and sound nothing like they used to, and shame on you if you expected more of the same. Despite a serious lineup change, Haste the Day have unleashed a lion with *Attack of the Wolf King*. The follow-up to 2008's *Dreamer* finally reaches the heights they strived for since the departure of Jimmy Ryan in 2005. With the huge choruses that fans have come to expect from their old material and a fresh creative team covering every sweep and bridge, this release is bold, beautiful and sometimes sinister. The entire album revolves around the triptych of voices from the wolf, the lion and the lamb. The metaphor is simple for those who know where to look and wonderfully engaging for anyone who doesn't. "Travesty" is a great single to introduce Haste the Day's newfound structure. "The Place Where Most Deny" is a crushing track and features guest vocals from Oh, Sleeper's own lion, Micah Kinard, who matches Stephen Keech's ferocity line for line. "White as Snow" is a brilliantly timed drop in tempo and displays the extraordinary voice of the only original member, Mike Murphy – a tool that wasn't utilized nearly as much in their past work. Haste the Day has rebuilt, refocused and reloaded with *Attack of the Wolf King*. [SOLID STATE] NATHAN DOYLE

CHILDREN 18:3

RAINS 'A COMIN'

That brother and sister trio hailing from rural Morris, Minnesota are back with the release of their highly-anticipated sophomore album, *Rain's A Comin'*. The punk-influenced foundation that embodies the sound of Children 18:3 continues to come across in the pseudo-melancholic lyrics; however, the raw and driving approach that was found in the debut offering seems to be missing on this album. While that is not necessarily a bad thing since a more refined and modulated approach was put in its place, I still find myself missing the catchy hits like "Mock the Music" and "All My Balloons." The lyrical trade-offs and electric delivery of sound are spot-on across the board of this album about taking chances and facing your fears. What cannot be ignored is the development of Lee Marie's vocals, which shine beautifully in "Oh Bravo" and album-highlight "Stronger." Her once childish and Muppet-like sound is now strong and clear. Reminiscent of early punk with ripe beats and resonant charm, "Stronger" tops my list of album favorites. The colorful and edgy approach screams Children 18:3. [TOOTH & NAIL] BIANCA MONTES

VARIOUS ARTISTS

PUNK GOES CLASSIC ROCK

It's easy to treat a song with a "hands off" territory-ialistic attitude, but even though the original artist may have nailed perfection, there are no songs that are off-limits. Get over it, and you might appreciate what's going on here. First of all, this is not punk rock. If it were, these would be irreverent renditions that deconstructed the songs and failed to put them back together – on purpose. These are screamo/emo/scene bands that play a melodic rock with few variations between their peers. Some have a screaming/dirty vocalist that counters a singing/clean vocalist. Most of them sport two guitar players that can play, along with a keyboardist to counter the distortion in the low end. It's a successful formula that works, partly because it's a new variation on an old theme, and partly because it marries aggression and melody. If you haven't been paying attention during the last decade and a half, tribute albums have become a genre unto themselves. It's not a get-as-close-to-the-original-as-you-can effort. It's a re-interpretation with the performing artist's imprint on it. For the most part, the performances turned in work. It's kind of like cheating, because the band is starting with a proven melody. Some of the song selections are scary, like "More Than A Feeling" and "Separate Ways," because the original versions have such proficient and distinct vocalists; but a little urgency and a lot of energy by Hit the Lights and A Skylit Drive, respectively, help carry the tune past the awkward parts. I have to admit, though, it's hard to listen to The Summer Set's aggression-less version of "Rock 'n Roll All Nite." Forever The Sickest Kids probably tackled the biggest challenge with "Crazy Train" (and came up short), while Blessthefall tried another one with fairly straight-up cover of "Dream On," (which works). The Almost turns in one of the better performances with "Free Fallin'" and, thanks to the previous adaptation by Jimi Hendrix of the Bob Dylan song, Envy on the Coast rocks "All Along The Watchtower" with prowess. If you're old and still can't get past these renditions of "sacred" melodies, then just hate this album. Call it the worst waste of plastic ever in the history of music – just don't get mad at a lot of the rest of us who will enjoy it all summer long. [FEARLESS] DOUG VAN PELT

NORMA JEAN

MERIDIONAL

On January 3, 2009, Norma Jean announced that they were going back into the studio to write the follow-up to *The Anti Mother*. To quote Twitter, "A little 'back to the roots' [was] in order." With a slew of new members and a vast variety of influences (the Deftones, Isis, Botch), going "back to the roots" could mean anything from the mathcore chaos of *O' God* to the pioneering punishment of *Bless the Martyr*. Eighteen months later, *Meridional* emerged as the aftermath of the band's dedicated and deliberate writing process. "Meridional" is a term typically used to describe southern areas and people, and the album is quite literally a return to the characteristics and traits of the Georgia powerhouse. The band turned up the dissonance from *The Anti Mother* to create a heavier album with more balance than their early work. Cory's vocals are as imposing as ever, and the choruses are as catchy as anything on *Bless the Martyr*. Oddly enough, the February release, "Kill More President's" fails to appear on the album, but tracks like "Leaderless and Self Enlisted," "High Noise Low Output," and "The People that Surround you on a Regular Basis" more than make up for its absence. *Meridional* is just the album Norma Jean needed to create to not only prove they still got it, but that they never left. [RAZOR &TIE] NATHAN DOYLE

MY EPIC

YET

I have a hard time justifying listening to this album in the sunlight. *Yet* carries the honesty of a mewithoutYou album and links it with the beautiful dynamics and chilling ambience of Thrice's more recent material. My Epic crafted ten tracks that reach into their heart and pulled out everything they could push their fingers through: lust, pride, joy, longing, rescue, pain, and hope. Everything is laid out and impossible to confuse. "Lower Still" is addicting and aggressive, while "Further Up / Further In" is steady and desperate in the best way possible. *Yet* is an album best played during night drives and rainstorms, elements that compliment its tone and longing. [FACEDOWN] NATHAN DOYLE

MAE

(A)FTERNOON

Mae's shimmering pop-rock has captivated audiences because of its candy-coated hooks – their first three albums featured tons of irresistible late-summer jams. While Mae's new EP, *(a)fternoon*, is mostly more of the same, it's not nearly as engaging as the band's instant classics *The Everglow* and *Singularity*. The disc hits the ground running with the energetic duo of "Over and Over" and "The Fight Song (Crash and Burn)." From there, it dissolves into a string of lazy slow-burners. "In Pieces" is a paint-by-numbers love song, while the lyrics of the mid-tempo ballad "The Cure" evoke, well, The Cure. Instead, *(a)fternoon* ends with the pretty but pointless instrumental "Falling Into You" and the overlong "Communication," which segues into a chorus of chirping crickets, a fitting end to an album with the power to lull you to sleep. [CELL] JEFF SISTRUNK

FOR ALL THOSE SLEEPING

CROSS YOUR FINGERS

Fearless Records has a clean-cut formula for the bands it signs: take a group of young, driven guys, add equal parts synth, autotune and breakdowns and market towards adolescent kids until they move on to something newer and more exciting. For All Those Sleeping fit the label's alchemy with precision. *Cross Your Fingers* is a solid debut from the newest players on the Fearless roster. Melodic, heavy, catchy and exciting, the album is fun to sing along to and provides an equal amount of throwdown for the kids dying to move. While it may not revolutionize today's scene, *Cross Your Fingers* is exciting and completely enjoyable. ~~[FEARLESS] NATHAN DOYLE~~

HEATH MCNEASE

THE GUN SHOW

Heath McNease is a total geek and he's not afraid to admit it. On the aptly-titled "Nerd Out," McNease gives shout-outs to characters from half a dozen popular fantasy franchises. However, he also makes it clear that there's only one supernatural entity that dominates his life: the God of Jacob. McNease's latest, *The Gun Show*, is a scattershot blend of hip-hop and pop whose lyrics touch on a sprawling variety of topics. The embarrassingly lame title track is full of G-rated come-ons; elsewhere, the fantastic "Pity Party" is an eloquent call for believers to be Christ to those who are in dire straits. McNease is an undeniably talented singer, rapper and multi-instrumentalist, and his arrangements on the album are wildly diverse. "Disco Biscuits" boasts an appealing slacker shuffle that recalls early Beck; "Space Cowboy" is driven by a bluesy acoustic guitar figure; and "Zion" is an irresistible faux-reggae number. *The Gun Show*'s best song is one of its most musically sparse. On "Makeshift Doxology," McNease rhymes from the perspective of a regretful alcoholic who is looking for redemption in the Lord. The soulful production on the track features a melancholy piano line, glitchy drums and choral samples. *The Gun Show* is an impressive if uneven sampling of McNease's talents. I just found myself wishing for a more thematically cohesive effort. ~~[7 SPIN] JEFF SISTRUNK~~

GRAVE FORSAKEN

FIGHT TO THE DEATH

Fight to the Death sounds like what would happen if a vampire started a power metal band with the members of Rammstein. Singer Vaughan Gregory's vocal delivery falls somewhere between Count Chocula and Al Lewis from *The Munsters*. Neither one is a good thing. The lyrics and themes on the album are horribly cliché in the metal scene ("This is a fight to the death /The battle lines have been drawn /This is a fight to the death /The time for war is now"). Uninspired gang vocals and predictable chugs dominate the album, the solid production can't save the dozens of solos that fail to take flight. Grave Forsaken is metal to the bone, but the vultures have long since picked those bones clean. ~~[SOUNDMASS] NATHAN DOYLE~~

WINTERSOUL

FROZEN STORM APOCALYPSE

From the opening blasts on "Frostland," it's clear that Wintersoul aren't messing around. So much black metal these days is just an excuse to put out under-produced, simplistic-yet-harsh noise. If that's how you like your metal, do not look to *Frozen Storm Apocalypse*. Stylistically, they ride the line between traditional black metal and atmospheric. It's incredibly fast-paced with lots of blast beats, and yet there are some programming effects that are present but not relied upon too heavily. Male and female vocals play off each other nicely, while the instrumentation is top notch. Lyrically, the entire album is a metaphorical play on the winter theme. The world in which we live has become cold, cynical and spiritually void. Unlike some of their un-black contemporaries, the message isn't a fire-and-brimstone salvation message so much as an indication of what happens in life/society when the light isn't present. It's a bleak picture that Wintersoul have painted — one that doesn't point to hope but rather the void created when hope is absent. ~~[NOKTERNAL HEMIZPHEAR] LOYD HARP~~

RODEO RUBY LOVE

THIS IS WHY WE DON'T HAVE NICE THINGS

For a record with serious ska sensibilities, *This is Why We Don't Have Nice Things* is a very simple album. Rodeo Ruby Love take the classic ska staples: horn-driven groove lines and upbeat two-steps, slow them down, add a thin layer of keys, Ben Folds- esque vocals and *This is Why...* becomes a simply nice album. Zachary Melton is charming. I was hesitant at first, but after each song I found myself liking his delivery, lyrics and melodies more and more. *This is Why...* is a great easy-listening album for people who like sitting in the sun, walking in the rain and watching strangers fall in love. ~~[XRA] NATHAN DOYLE~~

DISAFFECTION

BEGIN THE REVOLUTION

The latest from Brazilian metalheads Disaffection is a fun but forgettable throwback to the late '80s thrash scene. Disaffection's fundamentals are unimpeachable – guitarists Paul Moraes and Daniel Neves chug furiously in the style of their heroes, Kerry King and Kirk Hammett, while the rock-solid rhythm section of Helo on bass and Francuar Silva on drums holds down the low end. Vocalist Cleiton Magno, a.k.a. "The Kaotic Vo-Kaos" has a timbre that's more reminiscent of Faith No More's Mike Patton than Tom Araya. Magno and Morae's lyrics are mainly meditations on finding God's face in a bleak world. There really aren't any standouts; tracks two through nine are solid, but devoid of hooks. However, opener "Metal Combat" and closer "The End of Beginning" are unintentionally (intentionally?) corny. The former's proclamation of "Welcome to the metal arena!" sounds like a Spinal Tap clip, while the latter's ominous synths are more hilarious than foreboding. These two tracks are odd choices to bookend an album that otherwise deals with serious subject matter. ~~[BOMBWORKS] JEFF SISTRUNK~~

THIN ICE

REVOLUTION THROUGH TRIBULATION

This San Antonio hardcore band is not following the typical sounds of mainstream hardcore. Thin Ice sounds like old bands that we have come to love but so many have forgotten like Figure Four and Trial. The only modern band they draw from is Advent. Thin Ice does it well and makes me want to geek out at moments while listening to this well-written record. *Revolution Through Tribulation* was recorded in Thin Ice's "ice cave" (aka guitarist Jake's home studio) and was mastered by Chris Dowhan from Planet Red, who has worked with bands like Oh, Sleeper, Becoming The Archetype and Spitfire. The only thing I don't like about this record is the production on the backup vocals. Besides that everything is solid. *Revolution Through Tribulation* is definitely a great record for Blood & Ink to add to their catalog. ~~[BLOOD & INK] ROB SHAMELESS~~

Ratings

	DV	Writer
For All Those Sleeping *Cross Your Fingers*	03	03
Heath McNease *The Gun Show*	03	03
Grave Forsaken *Fight to the Death*	02	01
Wintersoul *Frozen Storm Apocalypse*	04	03*
Rodeo Ruby Love *This is Why We Don't Have Nice Things*	02*	03
Disaffection *Begin the Revolution*	03*	03
Thin Ice *Revolution Through Tribulation*	03*	03
Mychildren Mybride *Lost Boy*	04	04
OC Supertones *ReUnite*	03	03
Mortification *Twenty Years in the Underground*	03	
Malchus *Didymos*	03	04
Jimmy Hotz *Beyond the Crystal Sea*	04	
Jordan Elias *Desert Cry*	02*	02
Dependency *Convicted*	03*	03*
Elgibbor *Soterion Apollum Hamartia*	03	01
My Silent Wake/The Drowning *Black Lights and Silent Roads*	03	02*

MYCHILDREN MYBRIDE
LOST BOY

Mychildren Mybride know how to move. The band has been on an unforgiving touring schedule that predates their 2008 release, *Unbreakable*, and *Lost Boy* won't change that anytime soon. The new album is intentionally packed with tracks written to engage an audience. *Lost Boy* is stacked with two-steps, breakdowns and pile-on opportunities; and Mychildren Mybride put on a clinic on the effective use of gang vocals. "King of the Hopeless" balances a crippling breakdown with an astonishing hook that makes the track soar. The ten remaining songs are clearly a progression from the band's previous material (and in some cases, a clear homage), at times I found myself humming along their old lyrics over the new music. *Lost Boy* has moments of enthusiastic greatness, but the familiarity of the record makes that progression seem like a step rather than a full evolution. [SOLID STATE] NATHAN DOYLE

OC SUPERTONES
REUNITE

It has been two years since the disbanded OC Supertones released their 2-disk, *Ultimate Collection* of greatest hits, and with a line-up of festivals on the band's agenda this year, introduce *ReUnite*, another collection of tracks that represents the band's summer set list. Covering a selection of the most memorable songs such as "Adonai," "Supertones Strike Back," "Little Man" and fan-favorite, "Unite," the animated horn-lines and classic ska beats span nearly two decades of music introducing new fans to some old gems. [BEC] BIANCA MONTES

MORTIFICATION
TWENTY YEARS IN THE UNDERGROUND

When you're a fan and you go to your band's show, you hope they play forever and, thus, when they release a live album, you hope it's a double disc with 30+ songs on it. Thankfully, that's what we get with this Mortification *Twenty Years* live collection. While the sonic quality wavers a bit from source to source (like 3 songs from the band's first show in 1990) the performances and songs are quite good – including, surprisingly enough, the acoustic tunes from Norway's Seaside Festival. The second disc features the previously-released *Live Planetarium* album's setlist. To top it all off this German label that's known for elaborate packaging has included a nice 28-page booklet with metallic gold ink that acts like a collector's item tour program. [NUCLEAR BLAST] DOUG VAN PELT

MALCHUS
DIDYMOS

Polish progressive metal band, Malchus, deftly balance the brutal and the beautiful on *Didymos*, its debut record for Soundmass. Like their forefathers in Opeth, the members of Malchus combine technical riffs with fleet-fingered keyboards. The menacing speed-metal of "Holy Hypocrisy" changes tone and pace on a dime without losing any momentum. "Sign of God" features a haunting, stripped-down intro that segues into a punishing breakdown. Everything is soaked in a cool, melodic Gothic ambience. Keyboardist Dominik Dudek is the band's greatest asset; his classically-influenced solos on "Passio" and "Sign of God" are highlights. Jan Trebacz's clean vocals serve as a nice counterpoint to Radoslaw Solek's guttural growls. Trebacz's and Solek's performances lend essential weight to the uplifting lyrics, which are all in Polish. However, the language barrier is not an obstacle. Perhaps my only complaint is that some of the songs amble on too long and suffer from an excess of musical ideas, but this is a minor gripe. Malchus is immensely talented and a welcome addition to the metal landscape. [SOUNDMASS] JEFF SISTRUNK

JIMMY HOTZ
BEYOND THE CRYSTAL SEA

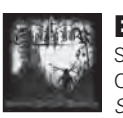
This is one of the early Christian rock efforts. *Beyond the Crystal Sea* was great because it was so far out of the "safety zone" of cheesy Christian-rock. It's more alchemy than metal, mixing loud soaring keyboards in an acid-rock/prog-rock format, it was amazing to young ears back in the mid-80s. Hotz has a voice not too far from Jon Anderson (Yes) or Peter Gabriel (as in the case of the bonus tracks here). As passionate and melodic as the sounds, Peter Gabriel's lyrics are ardent. Instrumentals like "Teton" pack a space rock punch not too unlike Rush's "2112" (just a lot shorter). Kudos to the new subdivision of Retroactive for unearthing this gem. [BORN TWICE] DOUG VAN PELT

JORDAN ELIAS
DESERT CRY

There's a point in the movie *Moonstruck* where an old man pleads, "Somebody tell a joke." Similarly, there are many moments during Jordan Elias' *Desert Cry* where the listener is simply dying for something funny or lighthearted, but that moment never comes. Instead, Elias fills this disc with overtly sincere spiritual sentiments. Not that there's anything wrong with being sincere or spiritual, but when Elias gets to the spoken word section of "Tickle My Ears Gospel," it sounds like an awkward middle school student trying to lay out the Four Spiritual Laws for the first time. Sure, Elias means well, but these wall-to-wall heartfelt songs all sound the same after awhile. When you're wandering in the desert all you can think about is water, but after you've downed a glass or two, you then need something with a little flavor. [CITY OF PEACE] DAN MACINTOSH

DEPENDENCY
CONVICTED

What a great record to come out of Nashville at a time when parts of the city are still flooded. *Convicted* is uplifting and has songs that I hope will speak to the city of music in a way that will lift them from their despair. "Ready for Conflict" is a song of hope that speaks truth in this time of trial. "Trust in the God that has set you free, even in the face of Armageddon." This band reminds me of Means (even how one of Means first releases was an EP). *Dependency* does the melodic hardcore scene justice. I cannot get over what a great record this is. I hope this record speaks to the people of Nashville like it has to me. [BLOOD & INK] ROB SHAMELESS



ELGIBBOR
SOTERION APOLLUM HAMARTIA

On the relentless black-metal attack *Soterion Apollum Hamartia*, Elgibbor seems to have one goal: to warn non-believers of the impending apocalypse. Unfortunately, the album itself is a roadblock to that message. Opener "A New Warrior's King" sets the pace for the disc. It's a tangled mess, featuring droning, three-chord licks, sporadic blast-beats and indistinguishable growls. What stands out most is the ineptitude of the production, especially with regards to the vocals. It sounds like the vocalist set up a microphone in an open field, stood 15 yards away and hit 'record.' Meanwhile, the guitars are characterized by a monotonous muddiness. The lyrics draw heavily from the book of Revelation - the ten-minute "The Lord's Devastation of the Earth" in particular contains an essay-size summary of the Earth's last days. Elsewhere, "Purity and Blood" condemns the Inquisition and other atrocities committed in God's name. However, the profound lyrical content is lost among the album's convoluted sonics. [DIVINE METAL DISTRO / SULLEN] JEFF SISTRUNK

MY SILENT WAKE / THE DROWNING
BLACK LIGHTS AND SILENT ROADS

It's easy to understand the motivation behind this album. *Black Lights and Silent Roads* is dark, deliberately paced and creepily haunting on both ends. Both bands complement each other in a way that consistently builds tension throughout the album. The problem is that tension is never released. *Black Lights and Silent Roads* builds and builds but never capitalizes on its efforts. Lasting an hour and 12 minutes, the album is insanely long for eight tracks of distorted black-metal, and the much-awaited payoff never arrives. While fans of the darker industrial sound may find a few gems here, this split is too much of a good thing for the casual listener. [BOMBWORKS] NATHAN DOYLE

The Christian & Art

WITH KEMPER CRABB

The Disconnect: Why Evangelicals Make Bad Art (Part the Twenty-Third)

In the past 22 issues, we have essayed to assay the reasons that Evangelical Americans, who reportedly comprise between one-fifth and one-fourth of our population, have produced so few examples of quality art of any sort. We have divined that this paucity of works of art is largely due to limited (and/or distorted) views of Biblical teaching (or a failure to act on the implications of its teaching), despite the fact that artistry is unquestionably one of "every good work" in which Scripture is to instruct Christians (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

We saw the negative effects of sub-Biblical beliefs on the doctrines of Creation and Eschatology, which result in denigrations of the physical world and time as appropriate theaters of God's Purposes, encouraging pessimism concerning history, and of seeing the world as Satan's domain, which needs only to be escaped from, rather than redeemed and fulfilled.

We also saw that deficient perspectives on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity lead to a destruction of Scriptural justification of symbols as simultaneously revealing both multiple and unified meanings. Deficient Trinitarian views lead as well to seeing men not as mysterious bearers of God's Image, but as simplistic machines manipulable by quick-fix formulae.

We turned then to a consideration of the implications of Christ's Incarnation, in which God, in the Second Person of the Trinity, joined Himself to a fully Human Nature and Body, in order to be the Perfect Sacrifice to atone for fallen mankind's sin by dying in their place. As summed up by the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451), the Incarnation is realized in Christ Jesus since He is "at once complete in Godhead and complete in Manhood, truly God and truly Man…"

This doctrine is a refutation of the Classical and Pietistic views that pit matter and spirit against each other despite the Scriptural teaching that physicality is a proper arena for spirituality (Rom. 12:1-2). We saw also that, since Jesus is fully Human, every area of human life (except for sin) is both proper and necessary to humanity's vocation before God.

A departure from an emphasis on the Biblical teaching that the Lord Jesus is both fully God and Man simultaneously inevitably yields a distorted view of reality and redemption, resulting, among other disasters, in a malformed and shallow artistic expression.

Many Evangelicals today reflect an unBiblical perspective on the Incarnation which mirrors in key ways the heretical distortions of Nestorianism (from about 428 A.D.), that believed Christ Jesus' Human Nature was only loosely united to His Divine Nature, so that His Humanity was not truly joined to His Divine Nature and Person.

The Biblical view that Christ is One Person, both fully Human and fully Divine, was deemed by the Nestorians as a blasphemous assault on Christ's Divinity, which the Nestorians saw as too holy to be conjoined with anything human.

Such a view leads to the conclusion that, just as Christ's Humanity was seen by Nestorians as something that had to be only tolerated in its close proximity to His Divinity, and as an unfortunately necessary base for the really important Divine Nature of Christ in His Revelation and Divine Mission, so also the particulars and generalities of humanity are seen as things to be at best loosely tolerated and at worst ignored, and irrelevant to God's Revelation and Mission.

For a Nestorian, humanity is at best peripheral to the importance of God's Being and Purposes, rather than something which itself is an arena for spiritual importance, relevance and revelation, as the Incarnation teaches us.

Since many Evangelicals in their imaginations and doctrine consider Jesus as only or primarily God, rather than the Incarnate God-Man (as fully Human as He is Divine), the importance of the full spectrum of human life (politics, art, science, etc.) is denigrated as inherently unspiritual and thus spiritually irrelevant.

This view inevitably flattens reality, resulting in shallow depictions of reality in our artistic expressions, giving these expressions the lie, showing them to be distorted, flawed as art, and are rightfully ignored. We must return to a fully-orbed, robustly Biblical view of the Incarnation if our art is to be seen as valid and truthful.

[kempercrabb.net]

The way I see it
Chris Wighaman

I'll admit, this might sound a little sappy.

I love my daughter. She is my little girl. I grin from ear to ear while watching her dance, play piano and attempt cartwheels. When she charges at me saying, "Let's wrestle," it's always fun. I don't know how, but I love her more every day.

I love my son. He is no longer my little boy. He is now a funny "tweenager." My heart swells with pride as I watch him play guitar, act in plays and run around the soccer field. When he thinks something is really funny and laughs hard, it's contagious. I don't know how, but I love him more every day.

The part of my day I look forward to the most is when I walk through the door and hear in unison my children yelling "Daddy's home." I truly love them more each day.

I was reading my Bible today and came to what is now called "The Lord's Prayer." Jesus didn't call it that. He might have called it, "The Idiot's Guide to Prayer," because that essentially is what it was. At their request He was giving the disciples an example of the way they should pray. He began the prayer with the words, "Our Father." I stopped there. Father, Dad, Papa, this is the way Jesus has us address God. Our God, among the many other ways we can see Him, is much like a parent. A grinning, proud, cheering, laughing, hugging, wrestling, listening and most of all loving Father. It's easy to forget that we are called children of God. It's easy to forget that the primary trait of our Creator is love. It's easy to forget that the love of a parent for their children pales in comparison with the love our God has for us. I don't know how, but He loves us more every day. Don't ever forget that.

"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" [1 John 3:1]

Devotions
with Greg Tucker

I recently approached a group of twenty–somethings and asked each to contribute to this column. The guidelines were simple: "Say something that matters," and "Say it in two sentences or less," Here are their submissions.

• Music comes from God. From the first beat of a heart He instills rhythm in every man. – *Sho Fujieda, student*

• The good thing about hitting rock bottom is there's nowhere to go but up. – *Shane Martin*

• A dream may be one way to escape reality, but reality is the only way to achieve your dreams. – *Michelle Flude*

• The truest thing I know about life is that it goes on after death. Beyond that, our purpose, every day, is to learn and love.
– *Stacy Tavarez, expectant mother*

• Bears, beets, and *Battlestar Galactica* – don't take life too seriously.
– *Jeremy Mead*

• Embrace the unplanned, explore the unknown, and don't fear either.
– *Shannon Martin, soldier*

• People are great … just not great enough to put your faith in.
– *Michael Sanchez, childcare provider*

• There is more value in what's happening in your life than can ever be found in another's words. Every day, good or bad, is a lesson.
– *Anthony De Los Reyes, husband and dad*

• God never leaves us, and true love is worth waiting for.
– *Shannon Alexander*

• The person you're around most in life is you. If you don't like yourself, you'll always be with somebody you don't like.
– *Sharon Lynn Shaheed, retail sales advisor*

• Breathe in the problem, exhale the solution.
– *Shannah Breslin, advertising*

• Resentment is never in style. In fact, it makes you look fat.
– *Nicole Montoy, English teacher*

• God's universe is not a small place. Move beyond your personal box to explore His greatest creations. – *Megan Ann Bogner*

These writers are doing what Solomon advised in Proverbs 27:17, sharing wisdom with one another. Fact is, there is plenty we can glean from our Christian peers, as long as they're willing to teach … and we're willing to learn. Let the lessons begin.

[Greg Tucker lives in your computer at HopeCCA.com and is president of Tucker Signature Films in Beverly Hills. You can write him at TuckerG@mac.com]

PICK OF THE LITTER

A Rose By Any Other Name

A Rose By Any Other Name is the alt-country alter ego of The Chariot's lion-voiced vocalist Josh Scogin. His solo debut is more Bright Eyes than breakdowns, and that's a good thing. On ***One For My Master and One For My Dame***, Scogin taps into a different outlet for passionate emoting. Whereas his work with the Chariot is characterized by intense full-throated screaming, A Rose By Any Other Name sees Scogin cultivating a tuneful, folky lilt. On tracks like the haunting "Future, Ghost, Rain" and the achingly beautiful "Unfather," he displays that he's equally adept at subtle melodies as he is at brutal growls. The lo-fi production makes it sound like Scogin recorded the songs in his bedroom, lending the album a profound sense of intimacy. (Jeff Sistrunk)
myspace.com/thejoshscogin

☆ Atticus Fault

Widescreen rock with layers of U2-esque echoing guitars and sweeping atmospheres. Atticus Fault's music seems taylor-made for arenas. (JS)
myspace.com/atticusfault

Hope at Hand

Hope at Hand weave deep melodic hooks and twin guitar harmonies into their cathartic post-hardcore. (JS)
myspace.com/hopeathand

☆ Ashton Nyte

Ashton Nyte's distinctive baritone has fueled The Awakening's industrial goth jams for more than 15 years. Now he's stepping out solo again with a striking collection of brooding country tunes. (JS)
ashtonnyte.com

Fozzy

WWE star Chris Jericho fronts this adrenaline-pumping hard rock combo, which is sure to draw comparisons to popular heavyweights Godsmack. This is their third album and first not on a major label. (JS)
fozzyrock.com

☆ We Are Voices

From a sea of predictable sounds and artificial gimmicks, Kansas City quartet We Are Voices emerges with an array of well-knit, allusive lullabies that will awaken contemplation. (Jonathan Kindler)
myspace.com/wearevoices

Stairway

These British metalheads wear their classic rock influences on their sleeves, with obvious cues to Dio-era Sabbath and Iron Maiden on their new album, *Interregnum*. (JS)
myspace.com/stairway

Soul Scholar

Soul Scholar play groovy 1970s-style hard rock. The riffs sound a lot like vintage Zeppelin or, to make a more recent comparison, Audioslave. (JS)
soulscholar.com

A Cry Farewell

Hard-hitting rap metal with cinematic flourishes; reminiscent of P.O.D. and Linkin Park. (JS)
myspace.com/acryfarewell

The Brigade

These Austin-based metalcore upstarts mix bludgeoning riffs with interesting samples and clean breaks. (JS)
myspace.com/thebrigadetx

Love Begotten

Technical, spastic post-hardcore that has the frenzied intensity of Fall of Troy and the muscular impact of Norma Jean. (JS)
myspace.com/lovebegotten

Nothing More

These San Antonio rockers lace their prog-edged alternative rock with glitchy electronics and smooth string arrangements. (JS)
nothingmore.net

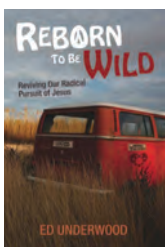
LIFEstyle

AVATAR
Avatar may be the future of modern-cinema or the disappointment of the decade. With familiar commentary on consumerism and Manifest Destiny, a single viewing of James Cameron's epic is plenty for some. Visually, *Avatar* established what future films should strive to achieve. While a DVD viewing may not be as monumental as seeing it in theaters, it's worth the experience. [Fox Video] *Nathan Doyle*
[Cuss: 32 | Gore: 25 | Sex: 10 | Spiritual Conversations: 80]

GODSPEED
Shut off from the world following the bitter murder of his family, self proclaimed faith-healer Charlie Shepard finds himself lured into the woods of Alaska to stare into the eye of vengeance. With an undertone of incest and cult ideology, this engaging thriller has you at the edge of your seat as the brutal ending plays out and leaves you questioning the entire experience. [Lightyear] *BM*
[Cuss: 21 | Gore: 30 | Sex: 5 | Spiritual Conversations: 100]

THE NATURE OF EXISTENCE
Roger Nygard (*Trekkies*) had a wake-up moment on the morning of 9/11, which pushed him to make this documentary to ask a long list of "tough" existential questions to a wide cross-section of people. While on the surface it appears as if he's balanced and fair by the diversity of interview subjects, the Eastern religions seem to get the most positive spin, while caricatures like a "confrontational evangelist" named Brother Ned got to speak for the faith we call "Christian." I found myself wishing for one voice to explain the grace of God in a reasoned manner, but none were present. It acts as a quick-exposure/teaser of the kind of world philosophies likely encountered at a state college. [walkingshadows.com] *Doug Van Pelt*
[Cuss: 7 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 1 | Spiritual Conversations: 100]

REBORN TO BE WILD | ED UNDERWOOD
Ed Underwood was a fornicating, drug-taking California teenager in the '60s (yeah, a "hippie") who found Jesus and was radically swept up in a revival that the church hasn't seen since. Recently, 40 years later, he was grumbling with another theologically-trained leader about the dangers of the "emergent" church when it hit him – why is a member of the last great revival one of the first to resist a potential new one? This epiphany coaxed him into writing this book, which describes the movement, six lies it believed that caused it to cease "moving" and concludes with keys on how to hopefully bring about a new revival. A compelling read with major ties to the music scene we call "Christian" and one that could benefit us with its wisdom. [David Cook] *DV*



HERCULES DJ CONTROL MP3E2
These ain't your momma's vinyl turntables. The leaders in portable entertainment solutions have created an easy, compact mixing station for the aspiring DJ. With everything that you need to create your own signature sound, just add the mp3 tunes and an amateur will find themselves producing music in no time. [hercules.com] *Bianca Montes*
[Setup Ease: A- | Performance: B | Price: $129]

WICKED EMPIRE KNIGHT EARBUDS
Wicked Audio pushes their newest line of earbuds as the ideal balance of fashion and sound quality. While the lows can be a little overbearing, these earphones perform brilliantly for bass heavy genres like rap and metal; higher frequency audio may be drowned out by the booming bass hit. The package includes a variety of interchangeable ear pieces allowing a nice custom fit for any listener. Wicked delivers on affordable quality, but the fashionability seems to try way too hard. The product is clearly intended to attract the *Jersey Shore/Tapout* demographic. [empirebrandsinc.com] *ND*
[Setup Ease: A+ | Performance: A- | Price: $34]

LOGITECH SPEAKER LAPDESK N700
At first glance it might look like that pillow desk that the sorority girl in the dorm uses to write on, but it's actually a well-functioning notebook/laptop cooling station/stand. Utilizing your USB power, a strong fan system keeps your portable computer cooled off and angled up for a better viewing posture. There's a stereo speaker system built right in (along with mute and volume adjustment buttons), as well, but here's the rub: sometimes multiple and various notebooks will not want to emit a sound. That can be a problem. [logitech.com] *DV*
[Setup Ease: A | Performance: B- | Price: $79]

ECO EXTREME
You might prefer a smaller carrying case for your iPod or mp3 player, but this water-tight and indestructable case has a built-in speaker that'll play your jams ... and the sonics are pretty impressive for a single 2" speaker. [gracedigitalaudio.com] *DV*
[Setup Ease: A+ | Performance: A+ | Price: $49]

PURE SCUM | MIKE SARES
Pursuing a calling from God is not always easy, especially when it is followed by 12 years of living in waiting. Walking us through the tribulations of risk taking and failure, Mike Sares honestly opens the door inside his church revealing the Scum of the Earth. Rising from the verses in 1 Corinthians 4:9-13, Scum of the Earth Church allowed Sares to find good in the most unlikely and separation with the ones you thought would never leave you. Building hope in the left-out, the right-brained and the broken, Sares reminded us that, "[God] gives himself to us because we are broken. Let us always remember that we, every one of us, are the scum of the earth." [IVP Books] *BM*

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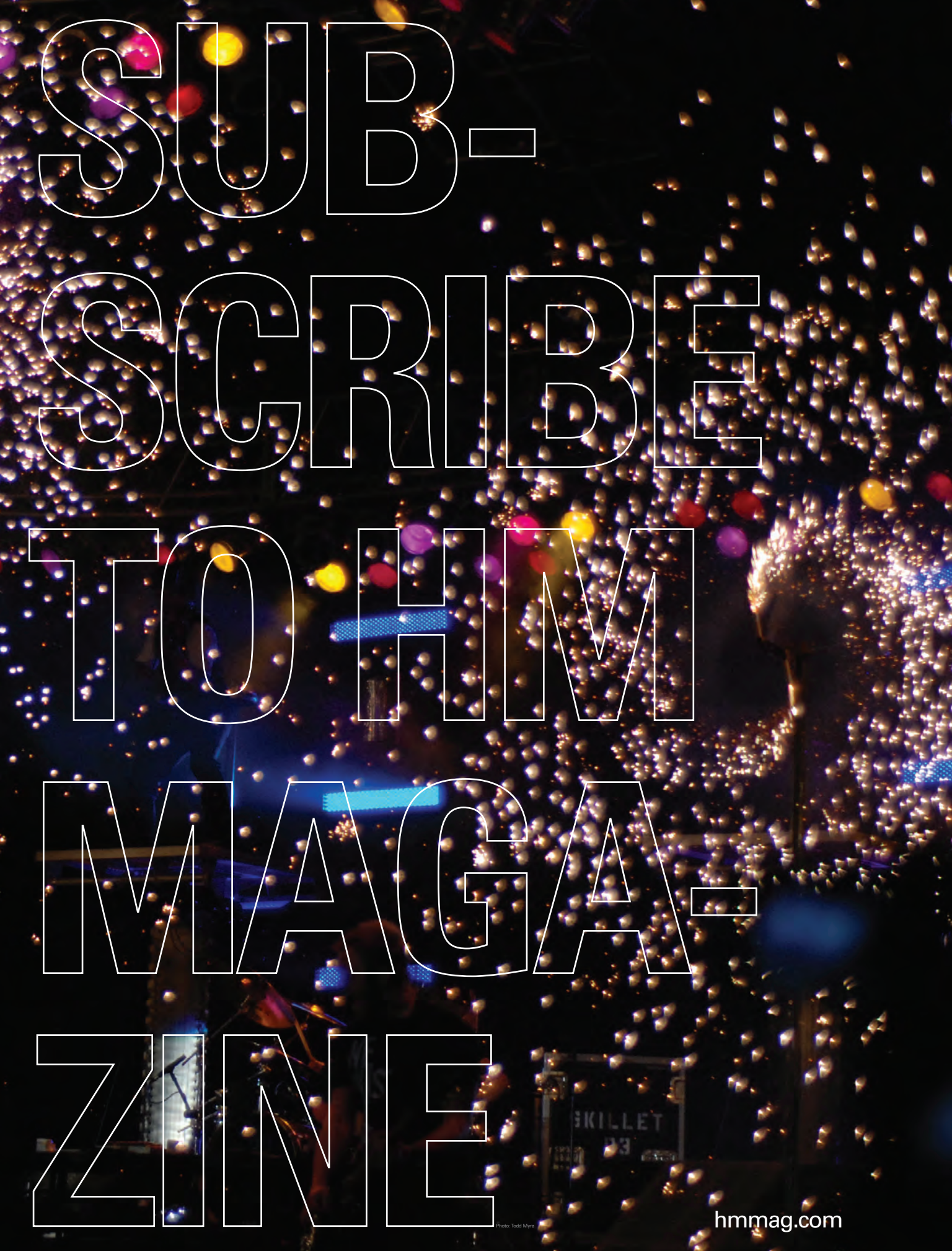
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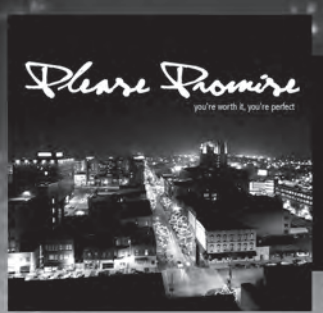

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"If you're a fan of Sigur Rós, Mono, and Radiohead's more linear moments, then Shapes Stars Make are going to make sure your 2010 starts off with a bang" -- Rock Midgets (UK)

"The music is airy with gentle flickers that light up small and large. The music consumes the listener like the lights in the night sky and lets you dream out loud." -- Absolute Punk

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Greetings from Chiang Mai, Thailand

My name is Gary Lansdowne. My wife and I are with Youth With A Mission, which is an international, interdenominational Christian missions organization. I have been a volunteer with YWAM since 1991; my wife since 1994. The main emphasis of what we do is Music Outreach and Mercy Services. My wife is also an English teacher.

One of the best forms of communication with the youth is through music. It crosses all language and national differences. There have been so many incredible opportunites to go to places where people would not expect this kind of message. Clubs, bars, prisons, military bases, open-air stages, festivals, etc. In most of the venues we are asked the same question: "Why do you come to a place like this?" The answer is simple: "This is where Jesus would come."

Most people think of a "missions trip" as going to another Country and visiting an orphanage, building a school or church. These are wonderful things to do and we have been part of some of these things. Being a carpenter, painter, plumber, teacher or doctor are incredible gifts that help so many needy, less fortunate people in many countries.

Since 1996, we have helped various Christian rock bands from 14 Countries play in 10 different Nations. Most musicians we have worked with you probably would not know. The best known artists that we have had the privledge of working with is Blindside (Sweden), Andy Hunter (UK) and Disciple (USA).

Thailand is a mostly Buddhist nation with a population of over 65,000,000 people. 70% of this population is age 35 and under. Christians make up 1.65% of the population. The average per capita family income is $8,000 USD.

I am asking you to consider being a part of a Music & Missions outreach. Because of the Internet, MTV and myspace, you can hear the same styles of music played in the Americas, Europe and Asia.

You will not make any money and most people will have no idea of who you are, but you would have an opportunity to touch young people with the love of God.

We are also involved with serving the Burmese refugees on the Thailand/Burma border. One week a month, we travel to Mae Sot and volunteer with a Burmese Migrant School. We have been able to go into the Mae La Refugee Camp which is home to over 48,000 people.

If you are interested in how your band can be involved with a Music & Missions outreach in Thailand, please contact us at: **circuitryderrock@gmail.com**

For other info: **www.myspace.com/circuitryder**
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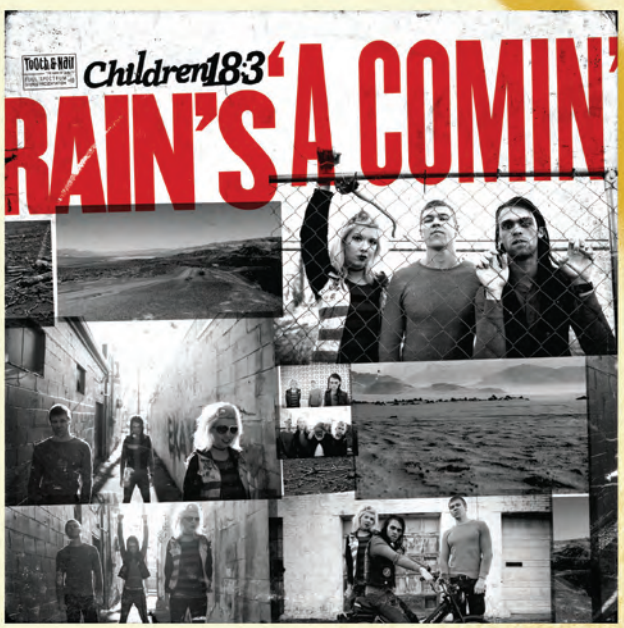

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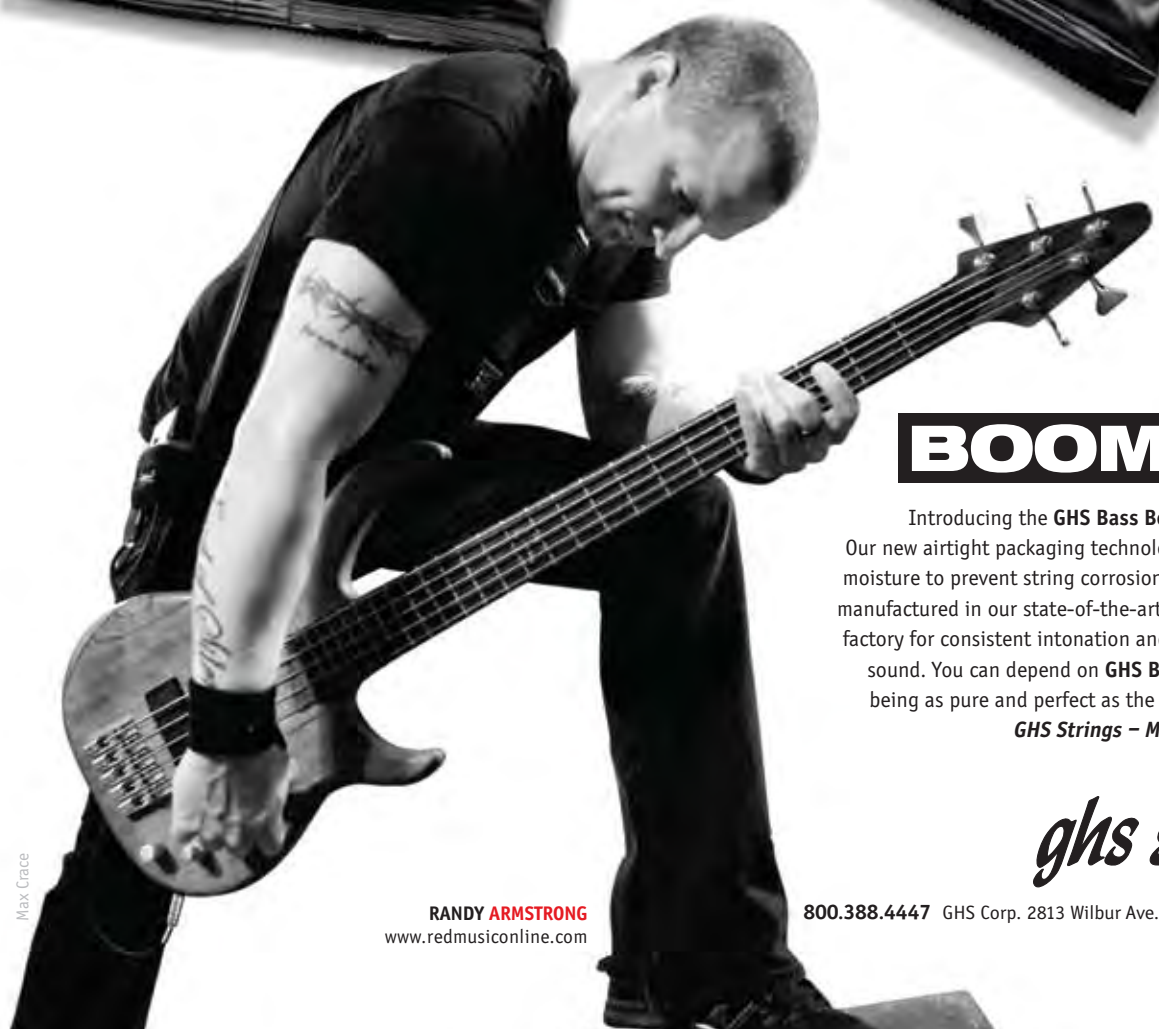

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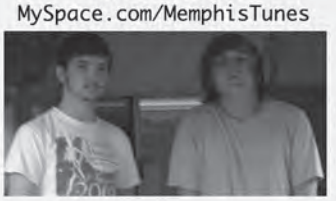

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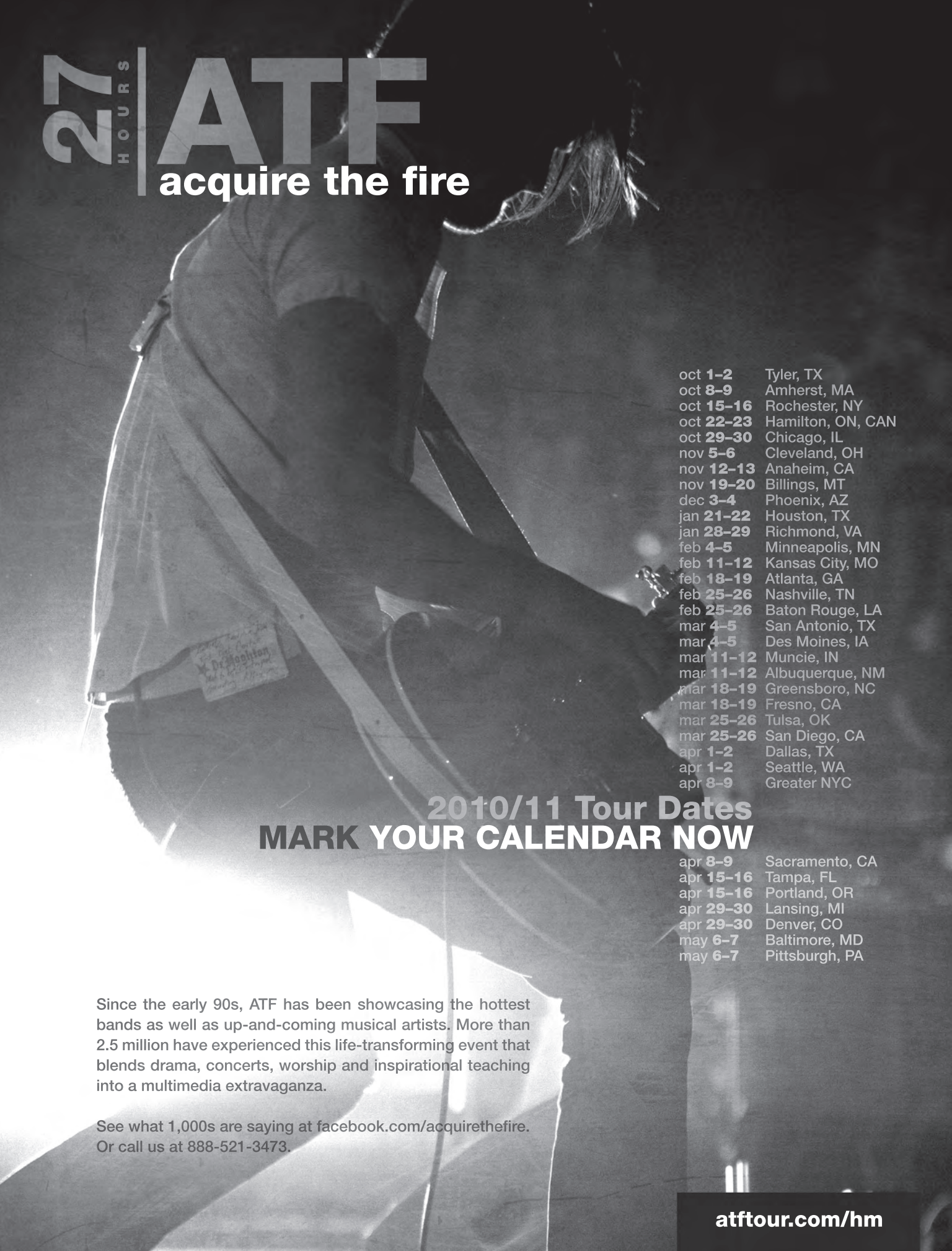
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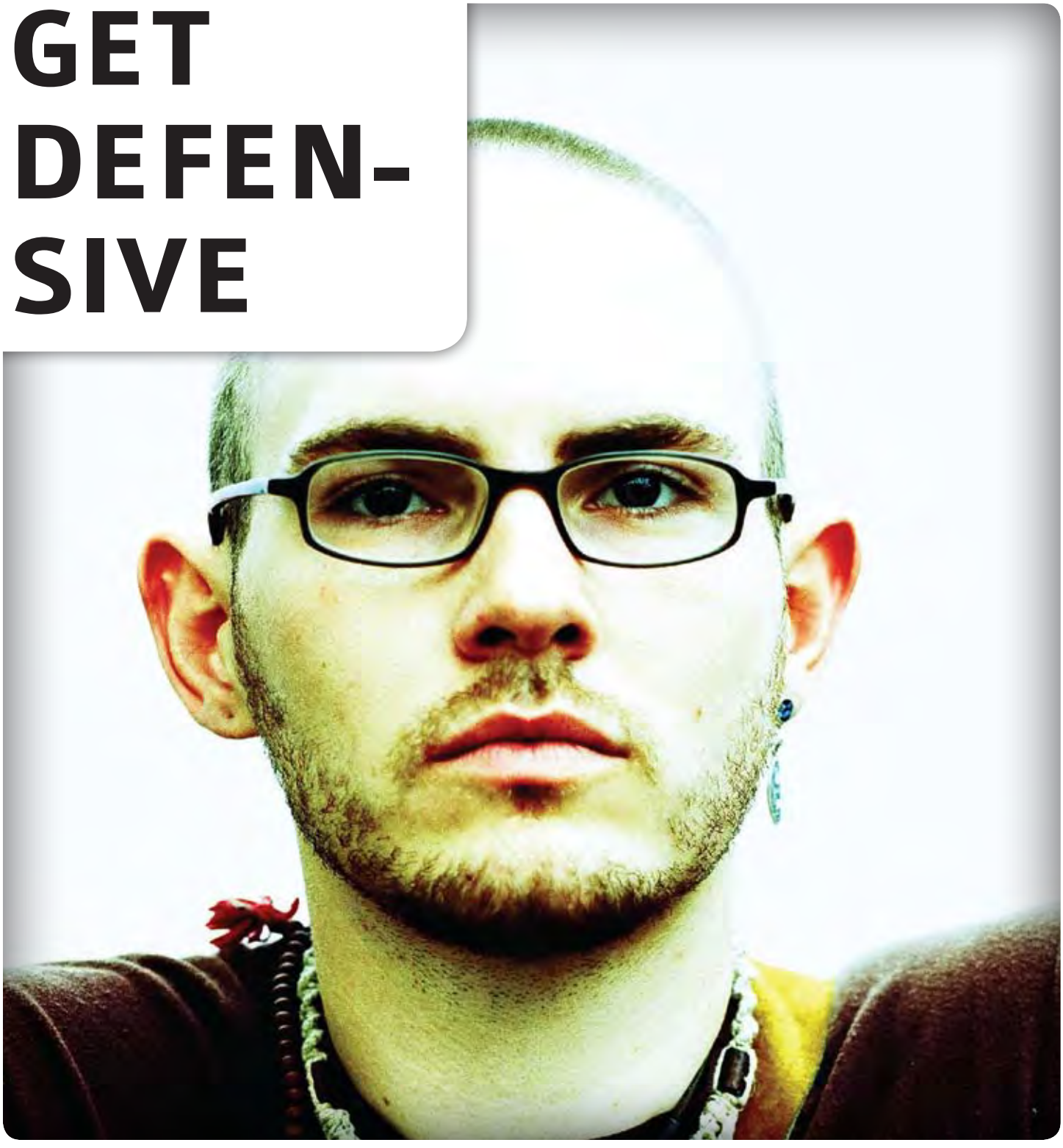

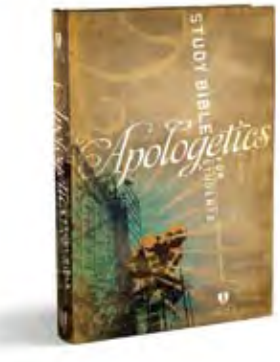

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DEAR ROGER

COME HOME, ROGER. YOU'LL BE WELCOMED WITH MUCH LOVE.

I WAS A PRODIGAL ONCE. I CAN TELL YOU, THERE IS NOTHING LIKE THE GRATITUDE THAT COMES TO YOU IN THE WAKE OF FORGIVENESS AND RECONCILIATION/RESTORATION – ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU'VE BETRAYED SOMEONE CLOSE. BITTER ARE THE WOUNDS OF A FRIEND. GOD IS YOUR FATHER AND HE KNOWS YOUR ACTIONS, YOUR REASONS AND (YOUR) HURT. I AM SURE HE IS WAY MORE CONCERNED WITH YOU TURNING YOUR HEART BACK TO HIM THAN HE IS ANY OF THOSE OTHER THINGS. WHEN JESUS TOLD THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON, HE STRAIGHT-UP STATED THAT "THIS IS WHAT THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS LIKE" AND HE PAINTED A PICTURE WHERE THE RETURNING PRODIGAL WASN'T EVEN IN A GOOD OR SO-CALLED "PROPER" MIND-FRAME. ALL THAT SEEMED TO MATTER AT THAT MOMENT TO THE FATHER, THOUGH, WAS THAT HIS SON WAS RETURNING HOME.

YOUR OLD FRIEND (A LOUSY SINNER),
–DOUG